



# Age Friendly Seattle

## Action Plan 2018-2021



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Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor of Seattle

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## City of Seattle

January 2018

Dear Seattle friends and neighbors,

The City of Seattle is committed to becoming a more livable, affordable, diverse city that is welcoming for all. One of my priorities for accomplishing that is to become more age-friendly. The day I announced my run for Mayor, I committed to helping our older Seattleites and helping families—especially those who are struggling to remain in their homes in the face of rising home values and increased property taxes. Older adults are an asset to our community—a vital part of our families and the fabric of our neighborhoods.

I remember when I was the most livable city in America. At that time, we no longer hold the title, but we can regain it by making consistent efforts to include people of all ages and all abilities in our planning. Our processes, decisions, and actions must ensure that we are the most livable city for all residents—you and me.

To do that, we need to help Seattle residents who live on fixed incomes save money and hang on to their homes. We need to ensure that the places where we live, work, and play are accessible to all ages and all abilities, all the time. We need to ensure that everyone has opportunities for social and civic engagement, and access to the health care and community services needed for optimal aging.

The Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan for 2018–2021 addresses each of the domains of livability identified by the World Health Organization and adopted by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, of which Seattle is a member. This action plan calls for specific improvements in the built environment—transportation, housing, buildings, and outdoor spaces—as well as the social environment—social participation, civic participation and employment, community support and health services, respect and social inclusion, and communication and information.

This plan involves many changes in the way that City government recognizes and meets the needs of older adults and individuals with different abilities; however, there is ample opportunity for involvement of businesses, civic organizations, and community groups, as well as individuals.

Please review the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan and think about how you can be involved in making Seattle a great place to grow up AND grow old. If you have questions or comments, visit [seattle.gov/agefriendly](http://seattle.gov/agefriendly) or e-mail [agefriendly@seattle.gov](mailto:agefriendly@seattle.gov).

Sincerely,

Jenny A. Durkan  
Mayor of Seattle

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## Executive Summary

The City of Seattle convened an Age Friendly Communities Task Force in May 2016 to discuss needs of older adults in the greater Seattle area and learn about best practices from around the country. In August 2016, Seattle became the 104<sup>th</sup> community in the United States to join the AARP Network of Age Friendly Communities, which provides access to resources and information on age-friendly best practices, assessment and implementation models, and experiences of towns and cities around the world.

Age Friendly Seattle builds upon years of work conducted by the Seattle Human Services Department's Aging and Disability Services division—designated by the State of Washington as the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County—and Aging Network partners such as Sound Generations.

In March 2017, a series of age-friendly initiatives for the City of Seattle was announced to address environmental, economic, and social factors influencing the health and well-being of older adults, and introduced an Age Friendly Seattle [Resolution 31739](#) that formalized the City's commitment to become a more age-friendly city under the criteria established by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. The resolution passed unanimously on March 27, 2017 and was signed on March 31, 2017.

The Human Services Department provided four overarching goals for Age Friendly Seattle, which are aligned with its mission:

1. Increase racial equity
2. Increase public awareness about the challenges and opportunities that accompany Seattle's aging population
3. Increase social participation
4. Reduce displacement

Throughout 2017, City staff focused on gathering information on needs and ideas for innovative solutions, increasing collaboration among departments, and implementing several age-friendly programs and projects requested by the Mayor and Council, which are outlined in this document.

Age Friendly Seattle's assessment looked at demographic information about the Age Wave—which indicates that the area's older population will total 25% of the total population by 2040—as well as disparate health and economic outcomes based on race, ethnicity, and other factors, obtained from multiple data sources. In addition, numerous community outreach events and several events specific to Age Friendly Seattle provided qualitative information.

The assessment resulted in the recommendations for improvements in eight areas defined by the WHO—The 8 Domains of Livability that influence health and quality of life for older adults—which are outlined in the following pages and described in full in the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

## 1. Transportation

To increase community mobility and help get people of all ages where they need to go, the City of Seattle will:

- 1.1. Encourage use of the Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods.
- 1.2. Develop innovative, person-centered transportation solutions.
- 1.3. Address transportation affordability for older adults.
- 1.4. Enhance travel training for older adults to increase transit ridership and improve first-mile/last-mile connections.



## 2. Housing

To help older adults age in place, the City of Seattle will:

- 2.1. Coordinate with housing stakeholders to assess the housing needs of older adults and develop action strategies.
- 2.2. Implement strategies to help older adults facing financial challenges to hold on to their homes.
- 2.3. Explore innovative housing models, including dementia-friendly housing, cooperative housing, home sharing, and partnerships among senior living communities, colleges and universities.
- 2.4. Promote visitability and independence through home modifications for people with disabilities.



## 3. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

To help people of all ages and abilities use and enjoy parks and other green spaces, safe streets, sidewalks, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings, the City of Seattle will:

- 3.1. Adopt Universal Design principles in land use and housing policies.
- 3.2. Ensure age-friendly components in neighborhood and/or subarea plans.



## 4. Social Participation

To support social participation and physical activity for older adults and intergenerational activities that are accessible, affordable, safe, and fun, the City of Seattle will:

- 4.1. Identify gaps in serving the social participation needs of older adults at risk of social isolation and develop strategies to reach out to them.
- 4.2. Provide more opportunities for older adults and adults with disabilities to engage in the life of their community.





## 5. Respect & Social Inclusion

To help people of all ages and abilities feel valued, the City of Seattle will:

- 5.1. Ensure that every City of Seattle employee understands the impacts of age, disability, and dementia/cognitive development, and the City's "no wrong door" service for information and assistance, so they can respond to and meet needs effectively.
- 5.2. Strengthen support for LGBTQ elders in Seattle.
- 5.3. Increase community understanding of dementia, its effects, and ways to be supportive.



## 6. Civic Participation & Employment

To help older adults find value in contributing to their communities and to lower the unemployment rate among people age 55+, the City of Seattle will:

- 6.1. Provide tools to help businesses and employers become more age-, disability-, and dementia-friendly.
- 6.2. Enhance the opportunities to mobilize the wisdom and experience of older adults, including people with disabilities and/or dementia, and provide opportunities for adults age 50+ and adults with disabilities to live with passion and purpose.
- 6.3. Partner with human services professionals to support employment of older adults who are looking for work.
- 6.4. Support development of new programming for individuals age 50+, including people with dementia.



## 7. Community & Health Services

To support access to affordable health care and community services that meet the needs of older adults and caregivers, the City of Seattle will:

- 7.1. Develop strategies to reach more older adults who lack access to services.
- 7.2. Continue awarding small grants for creative age-friendly/healthy aging projects through the HSD Innovation Fund.
- 7.3. Coordinate outreach to older adults among neighborhood organizations.
- 7.4. Increase public awareness of elder abuse and self-neglect, and enhance safety.
- 7.5. Increase long-term services and supports, including caregiver support.



## 8. Communication & Information

To increase access to information that older adults need for optimal aging, the City of Seattle will:



- 8.1. Ensure that all City employees who plan events or meetings, or have contact with the public are adequately trained to meet the communication needs of individuals with disabilities. See also trainings under Respect & Social Inclusion, above.
- 8.2. Adopt and adhere to a Minimum Accessibility Standard for City communications.
- 8.3. Determine assisted listening needs for all City meeting rooms and gathering places.

## Implementation and Evaluation

The 2018 City budget passed by Council in November 2017 allows for creation of an Age Friendly Seattle team in HSD/Aging and Disability Services, which will:

- 9.1. Ensure implementation of the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan.
- 9.2. Convene forums that support implementation of the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan.
- 9.3. Monitor outcomes of all Action Plan elements.
- 9.4. Raise community awareness of age-, disability- and dementia-friendly initiatives.

This initiative aims to help the region support the positive contributions of older adults and enable people of all ages and abilities to achieve their potential. The overall goal is to make Seattle a great place to grow up AND grow old.

## More Information

The Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan has had numerous iterations since mid-2017. Early drafts were reviewed by community partners and individuals who serve on the Age Friendly Communities Task Force as well as City of Seattle departments and offices. Greater detail is available in the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan. Refinement of those details is an iterative process.

To request the most current version of the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan and/or Work Plan, e-mail [agefriendly@seattle.gov](mailto:agefriendly@seattle.gov).

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# Introduction to Age Friendly Seattle

Age Friendly Seattle is built upon a solid foundation of work laid by Aging and Disability Services—the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County—and community partners.

## Building on Previous Work

### Aging Your Way

In 2009, Sound Generations—a nonprofit community partner, then known as Senior Services—launched [Aging Your Way](#) to help plan for the aging Baby Boom generation. Twelve gatherings were attended by 700 older adults. Five overarching principles emerged—each of them valid today:

- Intergenerational
- Multicultural
- Sustainable
- Supported by technology
- Focused on local economies

Aging Your Way found seven common themes:

1. Housing
2. Healthcare and fitness
3. Transportation
4. Lifelong learning
5. Local economies
6. Built environment
7. Arts and entertainment



Image courtesy of Aging Your Way, Sound Generations

Aging Your Way ignited interest in several ongoing age-friendly projects that are implemented in a variety of sites, including timebanking (e.g., [West Seattle Timebank](#) and [SWEL TimeBank](#)), virtual villages (e.g., [NEST](#), [PNA Village](#), [Wider Horizons](#)), and [World Dance Parties](#). Another village, [Westside Neighbors Network](#), is in development.

### Aging Network Advocacy

For several years, the [Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services](#) (ADS) has raised awareness that, due to anticipated increase in Seattle's aging baby boomer population, the



Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services, 2017

percentage of older adults in fair to poor health, federal funding that has not kept pace with inflation, and the increasing costs of providing long-term services and supports, local governments should:

- Create age-friendly communities that support the needs of older adults.
- Collaborate to leverage existing resources effectively.
- Develop partnerships to bring new resources and creative approaches that support successful aging.<sup>1</sup>

The ADS Advisory Council continues to be an important partner in this work.

## Age Friendly Task Force

Although the City of Seattle's Human Services Department (HSD) Aging and Disability Services (ADS) division was aware of the World Health Organization's identification of the domains of livability and AARP's efforts to formalize agreements with communities wishing to become more livable, administrations did not show significant interest in aging issues prior to 2016. A groundswell of support arose in 2015 and research into age-friendly communities began in earnest in Seattle. ADS convened an Age Friendly Communities Task Force in May 2016 to discuss needs of older adults in the greater Seattle area and learn about best practices from around the country.

The Task Force is open to all and has both countywide representation and experts in each of the [8 Domains of Livability](#). Task Force members, whose ages range from their 20s to their 90s, offer a wide range of intergenerational perspectives. Age Friendly Seattle will develop and implement strategies to increase racial diversity so that the Task Force reflects the City's racial demographics.

The Task Force developed the following:

- **Vision:** Our region thrives when people of all ages actively participate in community, have equitable access to opportunities and everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age or ability.
- **Mission/Purpose:** Our mission is to provide leadership to advance the "age-friendly" framework, created by the World Health Organization and supported by AARP, to further the goal of ensuring that our region is a great place in which to grow up and grow old.
- **Values:** Our task force is committed to fostering the following values:
  - Respect
  - Inclusion
  - Enablement
  - Equity
  - Diversity
  - Generational interdependence



**The AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities certificate  
is valid until July 27, 2018.**



## Seattle joins AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities

In July 2016, the City of Seattle became the 104th community in the U.S. to sign on to the [AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities](#), reflecting the city's shifting demographics and renewed commitment to the needs of all Seattleites. The network provides access to resources and information on age-friendly best practices, assessment and implementation models, and experiences of towns and cities around the world. AARP Washington has provided significant support in planning and development of livable communities in Seattle.

### Age Friendly Seattle Initiative & Early Actions

On March 22, 2017, then-Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and Councilmember Sally Bagshaw introduced a resolution expressing the City of Seattle's commitment to being a more age-friendly city under the criteria established by the WHO and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Age Friendly Seattle Resolution [31739](#) received a unanimous vote by the Council. It went into effect on March 31, 2017.



The resolution committed the City of Seattle to engage in a continuous improvement process to become a more age-friendly city by generating age-friendly goals through 2021, developing success measures, and integrating an age-friendly lens into the City's equity and inclusion initiatives. The resolution outlined early actions to show success in 2017 and early 2018.

Age Friendly Seattle oversight was assigned to the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD), which established four overarching goals aligned with its mission (see Implementation & Evaluation, [below](#)):

1. Increase racial equity
2. Increase public awareness about the challenges and opportunities that accompany Seattle's aging population
3. Increase social participation
4. Reduce displacement

Age Friendly Seattle accomplishments in 2017 include:

- **Housing:** Seattle Human Services Department/Aging and Disability Services collaborated with housing providers to commission a senior housing study and action plan. This interdepartmental and intergovernmental effort that includes extensive community engagement is focused on affordability and housing stability for older adults aging in place.
- **Innovation Fund:** The Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) developed an [Innovation Fund](#), modeled after the successful Neighborhood Matching Fund and Technology Matching Fund, and intended to test new ideas with a focus on results and racial equity. HSD designated \$125,000 of the total Innovation Fund to support seven projects that advance healthy aging (one of six departmental impact areas) and align with Age Friendly Seattle goals. Recipients included API Chaya, Eritrean Association of Greater Seattle, Latino Community Fund of Washington State, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA), Tilth Alliance, UW Health Promotion Research Center, and Women United. For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle [2017 Highlights](#).

- **No Wrong Door:** Seattle Human Services Department/Aging and Disability Services promoted a "no wrong door" among City employees, who can refer older adults, adults with disabilities, caregivers, family members, and professionals to [Community Living Connections](#) for objective, confidential information about local aging resources and service options.
- **Pedestrian safety:** Safety is a primary concern for all Seattle residents. Pedestrian safety for older adults is now a focus for both [Vision Zero](#) and [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) implementation. In April 2017, Pedestrian Master Plan age-friendly scoring criteria was developed and adopted by the Pedestrian Advisory Board. Both first and last mile connections for older adults are considered when determining priorities for pedestrian improvements. In 2017, SDOT's ADA manager established a new Pedestrian Access Advisory Committee to help address accessibility issues.
 

Category	Score
First Mile Connections	
Percent population over 64 by census block group	0-8
Last Mile Connections	
¼ mile distance to congregate meal site	0-1
¼ mile distance to senior center	0-2
¼ mile distance to medical facility	0-2
Maximum Score	13

**Age-friendly Pedestrian Master Plan criteria**
- **Self-sufficiency:** A variety of options to expedite enrollment in the state property tax savings programs and the City of Seattle's [Utility Discount Program](#) are being explored, including auto-enrollment. The utility discount is available to income-qualified [Seattle City Light](#) and [Seattle Public Utilities](#) customers. Property tax relief is available to income-qualified homeowners via the [Office of the King County Assessor](#). The Property Tax Reduction Program can save low-income homeowners age 61+ and homeowners with qualifying disabilities hundreds and even thousands of dollars each year, depending on their home's assessed value and their income level.
- **Sidewalk assessment:** Seattle Department of Transportation hired 14 college interns to walk 2,300 miles of sidewalks and map conditions—cracks, gaps, obstructions, and features such as benches and rear bus pads. They observed conditions where people walk that might be challenging for individuals with vision-impairment or for those navigating in wheelchairs. The information provides data that can support prioritization of future sidewalk improvements. For more information, visit the [SDOT Sidewalk Condition Assessment Project](#) webpage.
- **Equity forums:** Age Friendly Seattle Resolution [31739](#) called for two equity forums—one focused on the unique needs of [LGBTQ community](#) members and one focused on [women and optimal aging](#). These forums were held on June 3 and November 6, 2017, respectively.
- **Hackathon:** Seattle IT coordinated [A City For All civic technology hackathon](#) on September 22-23, 2017. Seattle IT received a \$10K [AARP Community Challenge Award](#) that supported the hackathon.



**Aging the LGBTQ Way: A Forum on Equity, Respect & Inclusion, an all-day event on Saturday, June 3, 2017, drew 130 guests.**

# Why This Work is Important

## The Age Wave

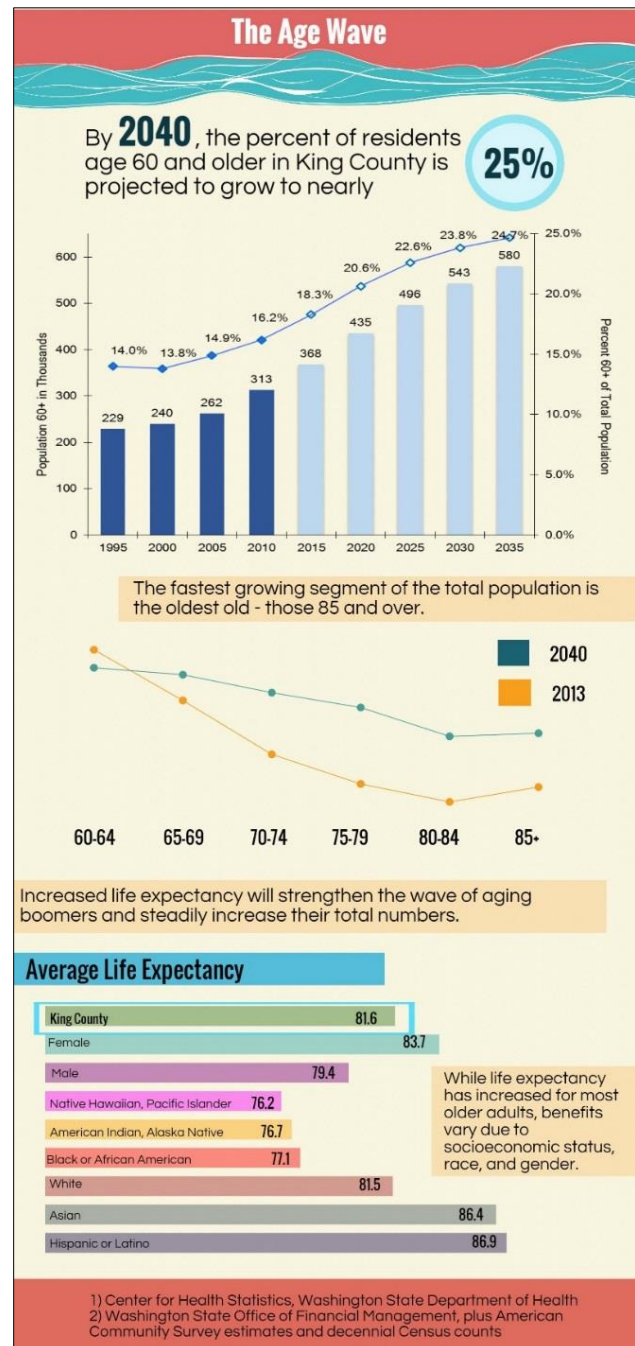
By mid-century, one in five U.S. residents is expected to be aged 65 years or over, and the percentage of older residents will surpass the percentage of residents under age 15.<sup>2</sup> In King County, nearly 18% of all residents are age 60 or older. By 2040, the percent of King County residents age 60 and older is projected to grow to nearly 25%. The oldest old—people age 85 and over—is the fastest growing segment of King County's population.

This year, the peak cohort of American baby-boomers turns 60<sup>3</sup>; however, the concept of "retirement" is changing. Many older adults cannot afford to not work, and do not retire unless their health prevents them from working. Others retire and then pursue their passions via "encore careers," with or without pay. Some retire and are at loose ends, wondering what to do with their time.<sup>4</sup>

## Race and Social Justice

Racial equity is at the forefront of the Human Services Department (HSD) results framework and aligns with Area Agency on Aging priorities to serve people with the greatest health disparities. An equity focus is particularly important for HSD's work with older adults because the impacts of racism are compounded with age; older adults of color are disproportionately represented in population indicators such as rates of chronic disease, homelessness, and reduced longevity. Basic needs are not being met for all older adults:

- Poverty rates are significantly higher for older adults of color than for White older adults (60+). 23% American Indian, Alaska Native; 19% Black; 18% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander; 17% Asian; 17% Hispanic, Latino; 7% White.<sup>5</sup>
- Communities of color, ages 60+, are more likely to report being in poorer health than Whites.<sup>6</sup>
- While life expectancy has increased for most older adults, not all populations have benefited.<sup>7</sup>



- Older adults of color experience a greater housing burden than White older adults. 60% of Black and 56% of Hispanic elders (ages 65+) spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared to 47% of White older adults.<sup>8</sup>
- Older adults of color are overrepresented in data on sheltered and unsheltered adults. Although 7% of Seattle seniors are African American, they represent 32% of Seattle's homeless age 50+.<sup>9</sup>
- Older people of color are more likely to lack the social and emotional support they need than Whites.<sup>10</sup>

Other concerns include ageism, including age discrimination in the workplace<sup>11</sup>; issues of respect and equity facing members of LGBTQ communities<sup>12</sup>; and economic insecurity for older women<sup>13</sup>.

Age Friendly Seattle will develop and implement strategies to ensure that the Age Friendly Task Force is reflective of Seattle's racial demographics. We will work with partners of power to prioritize action items that support optimal aging for people of color, immigrants/refugees, English language learners, LGBTQ community members, and women.

## Assessment & Planning

To create this long-range action plan, Age Friendly Seattle analyzed demographic data; an AARP age-friendly communities survey of Seattle residents age 45+; review of the AARP Livability Index, Elder Economic Security Standard Index for Washington, consumer and volunteerism information, and other City reports, plus outreach to community stakeholders at forums and events and to City department stakeholders.

The Age Friendly Task Force described in the [Introduction](#) discussed and prioritized many of the recommendations throughout the past year.

### Demographics

Seattle is the largest city in Washington state, the 23<sup>rd</sup> most populous city in the United States, and one of the fastest-growing.

Seattle's population in 2017 is estimated at 713,700.<sup>14</sup> An estimated 12% are age 50–59, 10% are age 60–69, 4% are age 70–79, and 3% are age 80+, for a total of 29% age 50+ (just over 11%, or 78,500, are age 65+).<sup>15</sup>

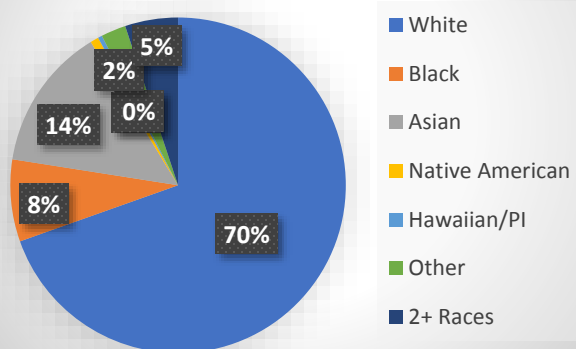
Countywide, 12.9% of the population is age 65 or older.<sup>16</sup> Seattle's older population is growing at a slower rate than that of other parts of King County, although Seattle and King County have similar percentages of residents who are age 80+.<sup>17</sup> The City of Seattle anticipates that there will be more older adults living in the city than there are today, as the baby boom generation ages.<sup>18</sup>

The Public Health—Seattle & King County [community health indicators](#) present considerable countywide age-related data for residents age 65 and older:

- **Place of birth:** 20.7% foreign-born
- **Educational attainment:** No high school diploma 11.3%; no bachelor's degree 62%
- **Employment status:** 5.1% unemployment
- **Median household income:** \$48,145
- **Poverty:** 9.3% live with income less than the Federal Poverty Threshold; 23.9% live with income less than twice the Federal Poverty Threshold. Poverty differs by [gender](#).
- **Housing cost burden:** Among Seattle residents age 65+, the percentage that spends greater than 30% of income on housing costs is high, especially among renters (62.5%) but also homeowners with a mortgage (32.7%).

**29%**  
of Seattle's  
population is  
**age 50+**

### Seattle Racial Composition 2010 Census Estimates



Total = 99% due to rounding error.



According to the American Community Survey, 2011–2013 3 Year Estimate, about 23% of King County's age 60+ population are people of color (four percent higher than in 2011).

## Life Expectancy

Average life expectancy at birth is 81.7 years in King County (79.4 years for males and 83.7 years for females). The average years of healthy life is 72.4 years (70.1 years for men and 74.8 years for women).<sup>19</sup>

The top 10 causes of death in King County are cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, unintentional injury, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease, diabetes, suicide, chronic liver disease/cirrhosis, and influenza/pneumonia (in that order).<sup>20</sup>

The top 10 causes of hospitalization for King County residents age 65+ are heart disease, unintentional injuries, infectious and parasitic diseases, osteoarthritis, cancer and benign tumors, stroke, respiratory infections, lower GI disorders, endocrine and metabolic diseases, and mental illness (in that order).<sup>21</sup>

## Health Concerns

Among King County residents age 60 and older, 18.7% report being in fair or poor health. Seattle neighborhoods that have a lower percentage of residents in fair or poor health include North Seattle/Shoreline (10.2%), Queen Anne/Magnolia, and Capitol Hill/Eastlake. Seattle neighborhoods with a higher percentage of residents in fair or poor health include West Seattle, NE Seattle, Ballard/Green Lake, Downtown/Central Seattle, and Beacon/SE Seattle (34%).

Specific health concerns among King County residents age 65+ include:

- **Weight:** 22% are obese and 39% are overweight but not obese—a total of 61% in this age group.
- **Physical activity:** 77% do not meet the recommended amount of physical activity and 21% are sedentary.
- **Nutrition:** On average, residents age 65+ eat fruit 1.3 times per day and eat vegetables two times each day. Sugar-sweetened beverages are typically consumed by 35% in one month's time. Five percent (5%) report that they sometimes or often did not have enough food during the past year. Reliance on the Supplemental Food Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP—called [Basic Food](#) in Washington state) varies by geographic area, with more SNAP clients per store in parts of downtown, central, southwest and southeast Seattle than in the north part of the city.
- **Tobacco use:** The percentage of all adult cigarette smokers in Seattle ranges from 8 percent to 24 percent geographically. Among King County residents age 65 or older, six percent (6%) are

# Top 5

causes of death  
among King County  
residents age 65+:

1. Cancer
2. Heart disease
3. Alzheimer's
4. Injury
5. Stroke

# 61%

of King County's  
age 65+  
population is  
**overweight**

smokers, with equal percentages of men and women. One percent of all residents age 65+ are smokeless tobacco users (e.g., chewing tobacco).

## **Unintentional Injury & Death**

Among King County residents age 65 and older, deaths due to drowning, falls, fire, firearms, motor vehicle collision, poisoning, and suffocation average 105.8 per 100,000. Among the same population, hospitalizations due to unintentional injuries average 2165.7 per 100,000.

- **Falls:** Seven percent (7%) of King County residents age 65–74 and 8% of those age 75+ report having been injured by a fall in the past three months.
- **Motor vehicle injury and death:** King County residents age 65 and older average 55.6 motor vehicle injury hospitalizations and 10.7 motor vehicle deaths per 100,000.
- **Other causes:** King County residents age 65 and older average 18.7 suicide deaths, 11.8 firearms-related deaths, and 4.1 poisoning deaths per 100,000.

## **Alzheimer's and Related Dementias**

Alzheimer's disease is a critical public health issue. It is the third leading cause of death in King County (see above) and also the third leading age-adjusted cause of death in Washington state.<sup>22</sup> One in three older adults dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia.<sup>23</sup> Deaths from Alzheimer's disease have increased significantly (89% between 2000 and 2014), impacting public health through disability and loss of independence.<sup>24</sup> In Washington state, there are more than 107,000 people living with Alzheimer's or other dementias and an estimated 324,000 unpaid family caregivers of persons living with dementia<sup>25</sup>.

## **Caregiver Status**

Washington state is home to more than 800,000<sup>26</sup> unpaid (or "informal") caregivers—family members, friends, and neighbors who assist with activities of daily living—as well as formal caregivers who are paid to care for adults.

The economic value of unpaid caregivers exceeds total Medicaid spending.<sup>27</sup> The majority of caregivers are women.<sup>28</sup> Nationally, the average number of caregiving hours per week is 24.4; however, one in four caregivers spends 41+ hours/week providing care, and the average duration of a caregiver's role is four years (longer for Alzheimer's care, on average, than for adults with other illnesses), which takes a social, emotional, and financial toll on families.<sup>29</sup>

Nationwide, 78% of family caregivers incurred out-of-pocket costs associated with caregiving in 2016, spending an average of \$6,954 on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving—nearly 20% of their income.<sup>30</sup> Those most financially-strained tend to be lower income and non-White/non-Asian. More than half experience work-related strain (e.g., change of hours and time off). For many, family caregiving results in lower leisure spending as well as lower retirement savings.

Note: The State of Washington pays for a broad range of day-to-day services and supports needed by people with long-term conditions, disabilities, and frailty so they can remain in their own homes. Washington is hailed as the nation's leader in providing long-term services and supports in AARP's latest [AARP Long-Term Services & Supports State Scorecard](#) (#1 overall and #5 in family caregiver support,

among the states). Plus, statewide, Washington does it for less—the state ranks 35th in Medicaid per-capita costs.

## Disability

Seattle's age 65+ population who live with a disability range from 34.7% (ACS) to 41% (BRFSS). The most common disabilities are ambulatory difficulty, defined as serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; independent living difficulty (self-care); hearing difficulty; and cognitive difficulty. Disability is linked to age, race/ethnicity, gender (women are more likely to report), income, and education.<sup>31</sup>

Per the same report, neighborhoods with disproportionately high numbers of residents with disabilities include:

- **Central Seattle:** Downtown Commercial Core, Belltown, South Lake Union, First Hill, Pioneer Square/International District, and Judkins Park
- **North Seattle:** Greenwood/Phinney Ridge, Broadview/Bitterlake, Northgate/Maple Leaf, Cedar Park/Meadowbrook
- **South Seattle:** Duwamish/SODO, Georgetown, parts of South Beacon Hill and Columbia City, High Point, and Roxhill/Westwood

## Gender, Age, Race & Poverty

One of the most telling facts about gender inequality is displayed in poverty statistics. Twenty-five percent of women age 60+ in King County live in or near poverty, compared to 19% of men.<sup>32</sup>

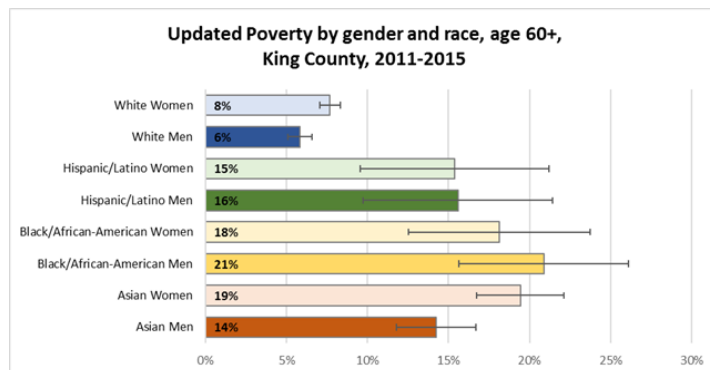
According to the American Community Survey, 2011–2013 3 Year Estimate, about 23% of King County's age 60+ population are people of color (four percent higher than in 2011).

The chart below indicates poverty levels among people age 60+ by race:

- White and Asian women age 60+ are more likely to have incomes below poverty than their male age and race counterparts (see below).
- Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino women and men do not significantly differ in poverty rate (note the large confidence intervals).

	Male	Female	Total
<b>&lt;100% FP (In Poverty)</b>	8%	10%	9%
<b>100-199% (Near Poverty)</b>	11%	15%	13%
<b>200-299% FP</b>	12%	14%	13%
<b>300-399% FP</b>	12%	13%	12%
<b>400+% FP</b>	57%	49%	53%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%

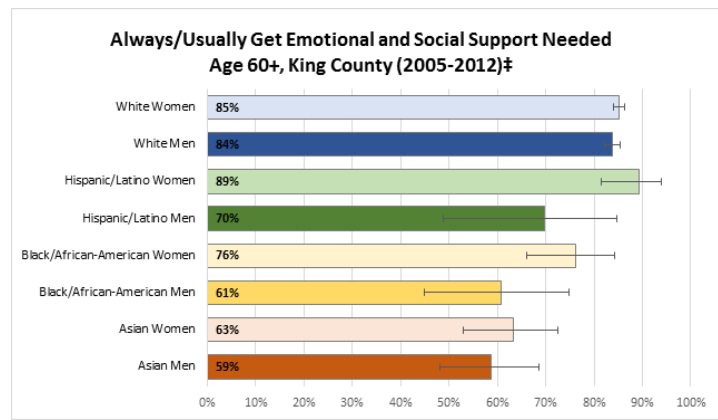
**Poverty by gender, age 60+, King County, 2011-2015**



- For other race groups, small numbers made comparisons difficult.<sup>33</sup>

Among adults 60 years and older in King County:

- A slightly higher percentage of females than males reported always or usually getting the emotional and social support they needed (83% vs. 80%).
- There is a suggestion of lower levels of social/emotional support among older adult Hispanic/Latino men compared to non-Hispanic counterparts; however, we cannot rule out chance as an explanation for the difference.
- Older adult Asian and Black/African-American males report lower levels of social/emotional support than white older adult males.
- Asian older adult females report always/usually getting the social/emotional support they needed at lower levels than white older adult females.<sup>34</sup>



†Data not available for 2011; data available for 7 years: 2005-2010

As noted in [Life Expectancy](#), above, women live longer than men on average. As noted in [Disability](#), above, women are more likely than men to report disability status. As noted in [Housing Status & Living Arrangements](#), older women are more likely than men to live alone.

## Language

Among the residents who are foreign-born, 84% speak a language other than English and 43% speak English less than "very well."<sup>35</sup> King County used five different sources to identify the 20 most common language needs of county residents (all adults). These are organized into three tiers, as follows:

- Tier 1: Spanish
- Tier 2: Vietnamese, Russian, Somali, Chinese, Korean, Ukrainian, Amharic, Punjabi
- Tier 3: Tagalog, Cambodian, Laotian, Japanese, Hindi, Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya, Oromo, French, Samoan

King County produced maps for several languages that indicate higher percentages of Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and African languages within Seattle.<sup>36</sup>

## LGBTQ

According to a Gallup poll released in March 2015, 4.8% of the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area population identifies personally as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (9,450)<sup>37</sup> compared to 4.1% nationwide.<sup>38</sup> In 2013, Seattle overtook San Francisco as the United States city with the most households composed of gay or lesbian couples (2.6%), and was the only U.S. city with more than 1% of the households being lesbian couples.<sup>39</sup>

Legislation that established full marriage rights for same-sex couples was signed into law on February 13, 2012. Following an unsuccessful legal challenge, same-sex marriage was legally recognized in Washington

state on December 6, 2012. By 2015, there were 4,078 same-sex marriages in the 981xx zip code area (roughly 2.71% of all married couples). Among major cities, Seattle has the second highest rate of same-sex female marriages (1.3%) and the fifth highest rate of same-sex male marriages (1.4%).<sup>40</sup>

## Housing Status & Living Arrangements

Seattle has 296,633 occupied housing units.<sup>41</sup> Seventeen percent (17%) of Seattle's households include an individual 65+ years of age. Among Seattle's nonfamily households (55.1% of all households), 9.3% are held by an individual age 65+ living alone<sup>42</sup> (31.4% men and 68.6% women<sup>43</sup>).

Nationwide, older women are more likely than men to live alone (27% ages 65 to 74, 42% ages 75 to 84, and 56% ages 85+). Even at age 85+, less than one-third of men live alone.<sup>44</sup>

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of Seattle's "senior households" make less than half the median income. About 9,000 "senior households" in Seattle pay more than half their income on housing. For the lowest-income seniors, Social Security makes up over 80% of their income.<sup>45</sup>

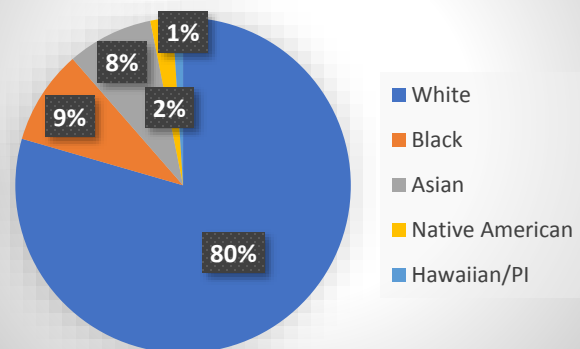
## AARP Age-Friendly Community Survey

In 2017, AARP selected Seattle among 13 communities to receive a comprehensive "livable communities" phone survey. The Seattle survey of 506 residents was conducted in spring and early summer 2017. Results were presented to the Age Friendly Task Force on August 18, 2017 and are available [online](#), including a report, annotation, methodology, and infographic.

Demographics of the AARP survey included gender, age, race/ethnicity, and marital, caregiver, and disability status:

- 48% Male | 52% Female
- 18% age 45–49; 17% age 50–54; 32% age 55–64; 19% age 65–74; 9% age 75–84; and 5% age 85+.
- 76% white/Caucasian; 9% Black; 8% Asian; 2% Native American/Alaskan Native; and <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 4% Hispanic
- 23% single/never married; 46% married; 6% not married, living with partner or significant other; <1% separated; 14% divorced; and 10% widowed
- 17% current caregivers | 38% future caregivers
- 57% excellent/very good health; 28% good health; and 14% fair/poor health
- 20% disability (self); 3% disability (spouse/partner); 2% (both); 74% no disability

**AARP Survey Respondent  
Racial Composition**



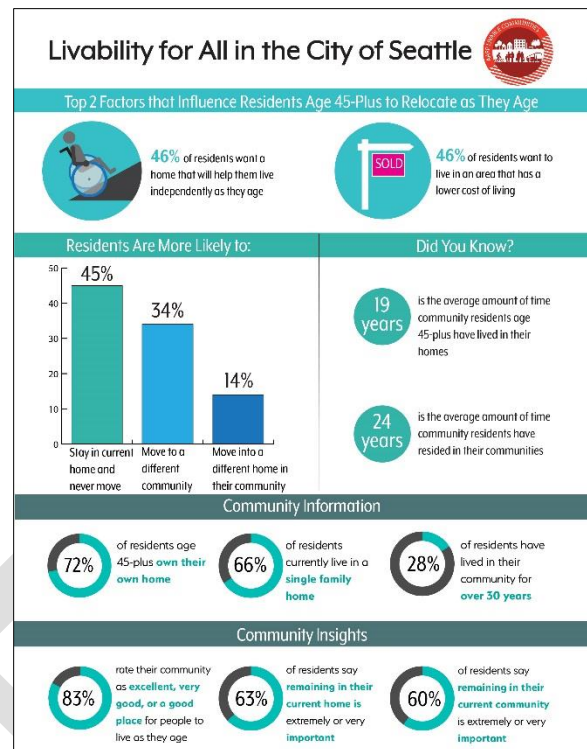
Consistent with other AARP surveys, Seattle residents want to age in place—live at home safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level:



- 83% rated their community as an excellent, very good, or good place for people to live as they age.
- 63% of residents say remaining in their current home is extremely or very important.
- 60% of residents say remaining in their current community is extremely or very important.

Factors that influence residents age 45+ to relocate as they age:

- 46% of residents want a home that will help them live independently as they age.
- 46% of residents want to live in an area that has a lower cost of living.
- Among all respondents, 71.2% said the cost of maintaining their current resident would be a factor in their decision to stay in their current home or move. 72.4% said they wanted a home that would help them live independently as they age (e.g., a home without stairs).
- Community concerns include cost of living (74.2%), personal safety and security concerns (68.2%), opportunities for social interaction (54.9%), and access to public transportation (53.1%).



**Click on the image above to open a PDF.**

## Housing

Affordability, home maintenance, and accessibility are high concerns.

- Only one-third of respondents responded positively about their communities having sufficient affordable housing options for older adults (19.1% good, plus 14.3% very good/excellent). A similar percentage feel their community has well-maintained, safe low-income housing (21.9% good, plus 13.8% very good/excellent).
- Nearly half of respondents (46%) said that homes and properties are well-maintained in their communities.
- 22% said they need to make major repairs, home modifications, or changes; however, only 22.5% said their community had very good/excellent home repair services for low-income and older adults for projects like roof or window repairs; and only 31.6% said their community offered very good/excellent seasonal services such as lawn work for low-income and older adults.
- Only one-third of respondents feel that homes in their communities are built with things like a no-step entrance, wider doorways, grab bars in bathrooms, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms (21.6% good, plus 12.7% very good/excellent).

## Sidewalks & Streets

Pedestrian safety is a concern for many older adults.

- Only 26.9% of respondents rated their community's sidewalks as very good/excellent for safety, accessibility, and condition, while 28.4% said very good/excellent on a question about street maintenance.
- 35.6% rated streets and intersections excellent or very good for lighting, accessibility, and safety. A significant percentage of respondents (34.6%) answered "good," bringing the total positive response on this question to 70.2%.
- 29.8% rated audio and visual pedestrian crossings as very good/excellent.
- While 41.6% rated easy-to-read traffic signs as very good/excellent, another 38.6% answered "good," bringing the total positive response on this question to 80.2%.
- 30.9% said their community was very good/excellent on providing separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- 28.6% said their community was very good/excellent about enforcing speed limits.



**Click on the image above to open a PDF.**

## Parks & Outdoor Spaces

Responses to questions about parks, public buildings, and outdoor spaces were generally favorable.

- A large percentage of respondents indicated that parks are well-maintained (83.7% good, very good, and excellent combined) and safe (37.8% good, plus 36.1% very good/excellent).
- Over half of the respondents indicated that public buildings and spaces, including restrooms, are accessible to people of different physical abilities (27.7% good, plus 30.6% very good/excellent).
- Over half of the respondents indicated that there were enough benches for resting in parks, along sidewalks, and around public buildings (25.8% good, plus 30.8% very good/excellent).

## Community Mobility

Seattleites are multi-modal—they walk, drive, take the bus, and let others do the driving as well. Knowledge of special transportation services and of driver education and refresher courses can be strengthened.

- 73.4% of respondents walk in their community and 81.4% drive. About one-third (32.4%) have others drive. 29% take taxis. 10.2% use special transportation services for older adults or persons with disabilities. 62.3% take the bus. Almost one-quarter of the respondents say they ride a bike (24.2%).
- Responses were overwhelmingly favorable for accessible and convenient public transportation (44.6% very good/excellent, plus 32% good, for a total favorable rating of 76.6%) with similar responses to affordability (41.1% very good/excellent, plus 35.5% good, for a total favorable

rating of 76.6%). Transit vehicle maintenance also received favorable ratings (48% very good/excellent, plus 34.7% good). Timeliness was also favorable (42% very good/excellent, plus 30.2% good, for a total favorable rating of 72.2%). Safety public transit stops and accessibility for people of varying physical abilities was favorable (39.5% very good/excellent, plus 31.5% good, for a total favorable rating of 71%).

- Although 15.8% were not sure, among those who were aware of special transportation services for people with disabilities and older adults, 38% said very good/excellent and another 30.2% said good, for a total favorable rating of 68.2%.
- Public parking lots and areas, including accessible parking, are thought to be convenient by about half of the respondents (29.4% very good/excellent, plus 27% good, for a total favorable rating of 56.4%. Parking rated lower for affordability, with 20.6% saying very good/excellent and 20.7% good (total favorable rating 41.3%).
- Among those who were aware of driver education or refresher courses in Seattle, 15.3% said they were very good/excellent. Another 25.7% said good, for an overall favorable rating of 41%. Of concern, 32.1% were unsure courses existed.



Click on the image above to open a PDF.

## Health Care

For the most part, survey respondents like their health care facilities and providers.

- 55.8% of respondents said very good/excellent when asked about maintenance of hospitals and health care facilities. Another 29.1% said good, for a total favorable rating of 84.9%.
- Generally, emergency care centers are conveniently located—39.9% said very good/excellent, and 32.3% said good, for a total favorable rating of 72.2%.
- Seattle's health care professionals are well respected, rated very good/excellent by 58.8% of respondents. 23.8% said good, bringing the total favorable rating to 82.6%.
- Although 29% of respondents were unsure how to rate Seattle for health care professionals' ability to speak different languages, 33.5% rated them very good/excellent and another 22.6% said good, bringing the total favorable rating to 56.1%.
- Hospital and clinic staffs in Seattle receive favorable ratings—57.8% respondents said very good/excellent, and 25.9% said good, for a total favorable rating of 83.7%.
- Hospital and clinic answering services are thought to be very good/excellent by 38.7% of respondents. Another 28% said good, for a total favorable rating of 66.7%.

## Home Care & Community Services

Knowledge of home care services is limited among Seattle residents:

- Nearly one-third of respondents (32.1%) were unsure whether Seattle had well-trained certified home health care providers. 30.4% rated home health care providers as very good/excellent, and 22% rated them good, for a total favorable rating of 52.4%. On affordability, 19.9% said very good/excellent and 21% said good, for a total favorable rating of 40.9%.
- Over one-third of respondents (33.8%) were unsure whether Seattle has affordable home care services, including personal care and housekeeping. 16% gave a very good/excellent rating to home care services, while 21.6% said good, for a total favorable rating of 37.6%.
- On conveniently located health and social services, 28.8% said very good/excellent, and 28.3% said good (total 57.1%).
- Knowledge of a service that helps people easily access aging, health, and supportive services was limited (29.7% were unsure); however, 49.9% gave favorable ratings (good/very good/excellent).

## Social Participation

Social contact is vital to longevity and quality of life. While social participation in Seattle is strong for some, there are many at risk of social isolation, some having little contact with others and some having no knowledge of activities for older adults.

- 70.4% of respondents have contact with family, friends, or neighbors every day or several times a week. Another 12.9% engage with family, friends, or neighbors once a week. Of concern, 16.5% of respondents have social contact every two to three weeks or less often.
- More than one-quarter of respondents (25.3%) said activities geared specifically towards older adults are very good/excellent. Another 28% said good, for an overall favorable rating of 53.3%. Of concern, 20.7% were unsure if Seattle had activities geared specifically towards older adults. Just over half (53.6%) felt activities were affordable.
- 27.6% of respondents said Seattle had very good/excellent affordable health and wellness programs and classes. Another 28.1% said good, for a total favorable rating of 55.7%. Notably, 21.4% said they were unsure. Similar ratings were given for affordable fitness activities specifically geared for older adults—27.6% very good/excellent, plus 24% good, for a total favorable rating of 51.6%; however, 21.1% were unsure.
- 28.6% of respondents felt that Seattle had very good/excellent activities that involve both younger and older people. Another 26.7% said they were good, for an overall favorable rating of 55.3%. Of concern, 18% were unsure if there were activities that involve younger and older people. Results of a related question about school events and activities that involve older adults were 17.6% very good/excellent, plus 20% good, for an overall favorable rating of 37.6%. Of concern, 30% of respondents were unsure such activities existed and 6.2% said these activities do not exist.

**16.5%**

**of survey  
respondents have  
contact with others**

**< once  
a week**

- Seattle rates well on cultural activities for diverse populations, with 68.8% favorable rating (good, very good, or excellent).
- Seattle rates well for lifelong learning opportunities, with 40.3% saying that education classes or social clubs to pursue new interests, hobbies, or passions are very good/excellent. Another 27.4% said good, for an overall favorable rating of 67.7%.
- A large percentage of respondents (72.2%) said that conveniently-located entertainment venues in Seattle are good, very good, or excellent.

## **Volunteering & Civic Participation**

Although Seattle rated favorably among survey respondents on questions about volunteerism, there appears to be a gap in knowledge—significant percentages of people are unaware of opportunities or how to find them.

- A majority (64.3%) rated the range of volunteer activities available in Seattle as good, very good, or excellent. Of concern, 14.1% were unsure if Seattle had a range of volunteer activities to choose from. A related question about volunteer training opportunities indicated that nearly one-third of respondents (30.5%) were unsure that training opportunities exist.
- A majority (56.2%) gave favorable responses to a question about opportunities for older adults to participate in decision-making bodies (e.g., community councils or committees). Of concern, 18.2% of respondents were unsure.
- 55.5% of respondents said that information about local volunteer opportunities is easy to find (good, very good, or excellent). Of concern, 17.6% were unsure.
- 17.9% of respondents said very good/excellent when asked about transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it. Another 21.1% said good, for a total favorable rating of 39%. Of concern, another third (32.7%) were unsure if transportation was available.
- 27% of respondents rated Seattle's neighborhood watch programs as very good/excellent. An additional 26.9% rated them as good, bringing the favorable rating to a total of 53.9%.

## **Job Opportunities**

Opportunities for mature jobseekers to find work that meets their needs and get training appear to be limited.

- 11.5% of respondents said Seattle has a very good/excellent range of flexible job opportunities for older adults. Another 22.2% said good, for a total favorable rating of 33.7%. Of concern, 36.2% of respondents said poor or fair, and 26.4% were unsure. A related question about job training opportunities received similar scores—13.9% said very good/excellent, while 19.7% said good, for a total favorable rating of 33.6%. 31.1% said fair or poor, and 30.3% were unsure.
- 15.2% of respondents said very good/excellent on a question about jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Another 23% said good, for a total favorable rating of 38.2%. Another 33.3% said fair or poor, and 25.2% were unsure.
- 15.9% of respondents said that policies that ensure older adults can continue to have equal opportunity to work for as long as they want or need to, regardless of age, were excellent or very



good. Another 23.7% said good, for a total favorable rating of 39.6%. Poor and fair ratings received 31.5% and 25.1% were unsure.

## Community Information

Survey respondents gave high marks to the availability of computers and Internet in public places. Although Seattle rated favorably among survey respondents on questions about access to information, there is some uncertainty, particularly regarding information for people who are homebound.

- 24.9% rated their access to community information in one central source as very good/excellent. Another 28.6% said good, for a total favorable rating of 53.5%. Of concern, 17.7% were unsure.
- A question about clearly displayed printed community information with large lettering received 17.5% very good/excellent ratings, plus 25.9% good ratings. Of concern, 17.4% were unsure.
- Access to free computers and the Internet in public places received strong ratings—50.3% said very good/excellent, and another 30.6% said good, for a total favorable rating of 80.9%.
- Ratings on the availability of community information to people who have difficulty or may not be able to leave their home were lower, with 32% saying good, very good, or excellent. Of concern, 34.9% said they were unsure.
- 62.6% said that availability of community information in different languages was good, very good, or excellent. Of concern, 16.4% said they were unsure.

## AARP Livability Index

Seattle scores 63 on the [AARP Livability Index](#), a project of the AARP Public Policy Institute—above average compared to communities across the United States. Despite average and above average scores in each area of livability, components within each category point to concerns:

- **Engagement** (social engagement and civic involvement)
- **Environment** (proximity to high-traffic roads and local industrial pollution)
- **Health** (hospital patient satisfaction)
- **Housing** (affordability—both cost and cost burden)
- **Neighborhoods** (personal crime; library access; mixed-use diversity; and vacancy rates)
- **Opportunity** (high school graduation rate; age-group diversity; and income inequality)
- **Transportation** (transit accessibility; congestion; and speed limits)

Among major cities on the West Coast that have joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, Seattle ranks second to San Francisco on the AARP Livability Index. Nationwide, among the same network, cities with a higher overall livability score include Boston, Great Neck Plaza (NY), and Minneapolis.<sup>46</sup>



AARP Livability Index score for Seattle, WA



## Elder Index

An Elder Economic Security Standard Index for Washington (commonly called Elder Index) was developed in 2011 by The Gerontology Institute—University of Massachusetts Boston, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging, AARP Washington, and other community partners to illustrate the amount of income required to meet basic needs without public, private, or informal assistance.

Based on 2010 costs, self-sufficiency for Seattle residents age 65+ ranged from \$20,016–\$34,188 annual income for a single-person household (depending on mortgage and rental status) and \$29,532–\$43,704 annual income for a couple, assuming no need for long-term care. With long-term care needs, costs rose to \$70,642–\$84,814 for a single elder and \$80,158–\$94,300 for an elder couple. Costs were significantly higher for Seattle residents than for residents of other parts of King County.<sup>47</sup>

Housing costs (mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance) put a heavy burden on elders and account for about half of their expenses. The need for long-term services and supports, even cost-effective community-based or home care, can double or triple an elder's expenses.

A related The Gerontology Institute—University of Massachusetts Boston report released in 2016 showed that 51.9% of single elders and 45.7% of elder couples in Washington state have total incomes below the Elder Index and rely on Social Security for 90% or more of their incomes.<sup>48</sup>

Seattle residents who are still working and not collecting Social Security can use the [Self-Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#) developed by Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County to estimate cost-of-living by family and housing type, and learn what public benefits may be available to positively affect the bottom line.

**51.9%**  
**of Washington  
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and**  
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## Consumers

According to the Brookings Institute, residents age 50 and older were responsible for nearly \$5.6 trillion of the nation's \$10.4 trillion in nationwide consumer spending, and are an important source of tax revenues (45% of all individual federal income tax paid in 2014) and charitable donations (highest rates of per capita charitable giving in 2015).<sup>49</sup> The report calls for involvement of older adults in [innovation districts](#) that can provide attractive and accessible places to live where it's possible to contribute to the local economy; where their wisdom, skills, and expertise are appreciated and utilized.

These findings have bearing on each domain of livability considered by Age Friendly Seattle.

## Volunteerism

According to a survey by the Corporation for National and Community Service, 31.1% of Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area residents volunteered in the community in 2015.<sup>50</sup> The area ranks 8<sup>th</sup> among the 51 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the country. The top six most popular volunteer activities were (in order):

1. Collect, prepare, distribute or serve food
2. Fundraise or sell items to raise money
3. Engage in general labor
4. Tutor or teach
5. Mentor youth
6. Provide professional or management support

The Corporation for National and Community Service lists numerous benefits of volunteering, including improved physical and mental health, lower rates of depression, greater life satisfaction, and greater longevity when volunteering is frequent.<sup>51</sup>

The Stanford Center on Longevity emphasizes that older residents' wisdom and experiences are community assets and that intergenerational relationships can transform communities.<sup>52</sup>

## Existing reports

The Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan includes data gathered through other processes and existing reports, including:

### AAA Area Plan

Every four years (with biennial updates), Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for King County—develops an Area Plan that charts the course the agency's work. In developing the 2016–2019 Area Plan, ADS conducted extensive community engagement, collaborated with local experts, and researched the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Findings included:

- Areas of greatest concern for older adults and people with disabilities were: housing; transportation; health and healthcare; socialization; and safety.
- Related concerns include economic security and the built environment. Older adults are concerned about being able to afford to continue living in their communities as they age, as well as the ability to stay engaged in their communities by getting around safely.
- Older adults on fixed incomes are significantly impacted by increases in costs for housing and health care, which may leave them with less money for food (11% of older adults in King County experience food scarcity).
- Community providers see an increase in program participants with complex challenges, such as behavioral health issues, dementia, and homelessness.
- Older adults prefer to get information from trusted sources in their communities
- Trusted relationships with people and organizations that have a common understanding of language and culture is extremely important for elders in ethnic and cultural communities.



- Many people don't know where to turn for help and may run into barriers, such as transportation, technology, language, and culture when trying to access known services.

Learn more about the Area Plan [here](#).

## ***Aging with Pride***

At-Risk and Underserved: LGBTQ Older Adults in Seattle/King County Findings, by Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen, PhD (et al.) was published by Aging with Pride, University of Washington, in October 2015. Dr. Fredriksen-Goldsen presented the findings at two events—an Aging the LGBTQ Way Town Hall meeting on May 2015, which helped inform development of the AAA Area Plan, and Aging the LGBTQ Way: A Forum on Equity, Respect & Inclusion in June 2017, listed above.

- LGBTQ older adults are at elevated risk of disability, poor health, mental distress, discrimination, bias, and victimization.
- Most LGBTQ older adult participants feel good about belonging to the LGBTQ communities and are satisfied with their lives.
- Although most participants completed college, many are poor. Nearly one-quarter are living below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- Over 45% live alone and are at high risk of social isolation. More than half of the participants feel they lack companionship, feel isolated from others, or feel left out. About one in three have difficulty identifying someone in their lives to provide assistance if needed.
- Compared to their heterosexual peers, the participants are less likely to be partnered or married and have fewer children and other cross-generational ties. They rely heavily on peers for support; yet, many of their peers face their own aging and health challenges.
- One in five survey participants have served in the military. Only 14% of those who served in the military are accessing Veteran's insurance benefits; yet, they are more likely to report poor general health, financial barriers to care and obtaining medication.
- LGBTQ older adults at elevated risk with many unmet aging and health needs include transgender older adults, those living in poverty, those with lower education, those living with HIV, LGBTQ veterans, LGBTQ older adults of color, and the oldest participants.
- Most aging and health and human services providers do not have adequate training to effectively serve LGBTQ older adults; of the participants, 16% have been denied services or were provided with inferior services due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- LGBTQ older adult participants are not able to obtain culturally relevant and appropriate services; one in six fear obtaining services outside the LGBTQ communities. LGBTQ communities, as well as the larger community, are inadequately prepared to support LGBTQ older adults.

Learn more about Aging with Pride [here](#).

## ***City of Seattle and Seattle Housing Authority Joint Assessment of Fair Housing***

This 2017 assessment provides considerable information about individuals with disabilities living in Seattle, the numbers of which are under-reported. Estimates of Seattle's age 65+ population who live with a disability range from 34.7% (ACS) to 41% (BRFSS).

- The most common disabilities are ambulatory difficulty, defined as serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; independent living difficulty (self care); hearing difficulty; and cognitive difficulty.
- Neighborhoods with disproportionately high numbers of residents with disabilities include:
  - **Central Seattle:** Downtown Commercial Core, Belltown, South Lake Union, First Hill, Pioneer Square/International District, and Judkins Park
  - **North Seattle:** Greenwood/Phinney Ridge, Broadview/Bitterlake, Northgate/Maple Leaf, Cedar Park/Meadowbrook
  - **South Seattle:** Duwamish/SODO, Georgetown, parts of South Beacon Hill and Columbia City, High Point, and Roxhill/Westwood

Disability is linked to age, race/ethnicity, gender (women are more likely to report), income, and education. Learn more about the assessment of fair housing [here](#).

## ***Quiet Crisis: Age Wave Maxes Out Affordable Housing, King County 2008-2025***

In February 2009, a coalition of public agencies (Aging and Disability Services, Seattle Office of Housing, King County Housing Authority, King County Housing & Community Development, Seattle Housing Authority) released a report that looked at demographic trends and the need for affordable senior housing. Key points included:

- Thousands of low-income older adults were waiting for assistance from local housing authorities.
- Most older adults will outlive their individual savings.
- Countywide, an additional 936 subsidized units would need to be created each year until 2025, just to maintain the 2009 ratio of affordable housing to low-income adults age 65+.

Learn more about The Quiet Crisis [here](#). Efforts are underway to update this report. In 2018, the City of Seattle and regional housing partners will have a new senior housing action plan that will provide the foundation for Age Friendly Seattle housing strategies.

## ***Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan***

Seattle is a city of neighborhoods, with parks, schools, businesses, and history that contribute to a strong sense of place and community. Seattle's Comp Plan recognizes that Seattle must be shaped in a way that is attractive to aging residents hoping to grow old in the place they've called home. The Plan's policies support investments in facilities and programs designed to reduce health disparities by:

- Providing access to open space and recreational activities for older adults.
- Creating compact, walkable neighborhoods that are easy to serve with transit.
- Enhancing access to arts, music, and cultural institutions for older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Addressing equity and meaningful involvement by diverse community members, including older adults, in decision-making processes.
- Increasing access to culturally appropriate food; and efforts to reduce poverty and its effects among the elderly.

Learn more about Seattle 2035 [here](#).

## Outreach events

More than 580 individuals participated in special events that were organized to help inform development of the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan, including:

- **Engaging Aging Women's Equity Forum** (November 6, 2017) was co-sponsored by nearly 30 community-based organizations serving women. The forum included a resource fair with 50 exhibitors, welcome remarks by the deputy mayor and two councilmembers, a keynote presentation, and seven "lightning talks" on issues related to women and optimal aging. Each lightning talk presenter prepared an issue brief, which was available for pre-forum reading and printed in the forum program.

[program](#) | [report](#) | [video](#) | [slidedecks](#)

- **African American Caregivers Forum**—A forum for caregivers whose loved ones are experiencing Alzheimer's or a related dementia, co-sponsored by Age Friendly Seattle on October 21, 2017, drew more than 70 people. [flyer](#)
- **AARP/KOMO News "Seattle for All Ages" Mayoral Debate** (streamed live on October 10, 2017, televised on October 14, 2017) was promoted by the Age Friendly Communities Task Force.

[blog](#) | [video](#)

# 1,680

**Seattle residents  
were directly or  
indirectly engaged  
in development of  
the Age Friendly  
Seattle Action Plan.**



**"Engaging Aging," the Age Friendly Seattle women's equity forum, drew 200 people, mostly women, of all ages on November 6, 2017.**



- **A City for All Civic Technology Hackathon** (September 22–24, 2017) resulted in 78 participants, 55 of whom stayed the entire weekend. Nine teams presented projects on the final day. Three teams won four cash prizes made possible by the AARP Livable Communities Community Challenge Grant. [report](#) | [video](#)



One of nine teams that participated in the "A City for All" civic technology hackathon on September 22–24, 2017.

- **Pedestrian Potluck** (September 20, 2017) featured [Sound Steps](#)—the [Seattle Parks and Recreation](#) walking program for people age 50+—along with SDOT's [Vision Zero](#), [Mobility Management](#), and [Sidewalk Condition Assessment Project](#); Department of Neighborhoods' [Outreach and Engagement](#) programs; [Hopelink](#); [King County Mobility Coalition](#); Public Health—Seattle & King County [Access & Outreach](#) programs; [Seattle Neighborhood Greenways](#); Sound Generations' [Hyde Shuttle](#) and [Volunteer Transportation](#) programs; and the Seattle Human Services Department's [Aging and Disability Services](#) division. Forty-four people attended the event. [flyer](#)

- **Aging the LGBTQ Way: A Forum on Equity, Respect & Inclusion** (June 2017) was a day-long event at Seattle City Hall that attracted 130 people that enjoyed support from Aging and Disability Services, Entre Hermanos, Gay City: Seattle's LGBTQ Center, Generations Aging with Pride, Ingersoll Gender Center, LGBTQ Allyship, Office of the Mayor, POCAAN, Seattle Department of



Aging the LGBTQ way: a forum on equity, respect, and inclusion

Click above to watch The Seattle Channel's video of the event.

- Neighborhoods, Seattle Human Services Department, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the UW Aging with Pride National Health, Aging, Sexuality and Gender Study: [report](#) | [video](#)
- **Lake City Senior Meal Program** (May 2017) [article](#)
- **HIV is Ageless**—a forum for older adults living with HIV (March 2017) [event flyer](#)
- **SHA Immigrant/Refugee Elders Luncheon** at NewHolly (March 2017) [event flyer](#)
- **Black History Celebration & Reception** (February 2017) [event flyer](#)

Age Friendly Seattle staff participated in [Find It, Fix It community walks](#) with residents of Highland Park (May 25) and First Hill (July 11). Age Friendly Task Force members participated in Find It, Fix It walks in the



Roxhill/Westwood neighborhood (July 25) and Delridge (October 3). The walks are an opportunity to identify physical elements in neighborhoods that make it feel unsafe or poorly maintained. The [Seattle Department of Neighborhoods](#) coordinated and [Seattle Police Department](#) led the walks. The City's Find It, Fix It [mobile app](#) is hosted by the [Finance & Administrative Services Department's Customer Service Bureau](#).

In addition, more than 1,100 individuals participated in briefings, discussion groups, listening posts, and tours that either promoted Age Friendly Seattle or informed development of the Action Plan:

- Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Advisory Council & Seattle Mayor's Office for African American Elders (joint meeting, November 2016)
- ADS Advisory Council Retreat (January 2017)
- ADS Advocacy Committee & King County Veterans and Human Services Levy (joint meeting, November 2016)
- Americorps Training (March 2017)
- Bellevue Network on Aging (March 2017)
- First Hill League at Horizon House (February 2017)
- Greenlake Library (March 2016)
- Healthy Aging Partnership (February 2016)
- Healthy King County Coalition (October 2016)
- Housing and Aging Conference (November 2016)
- Human Services Department ADA Coordination Group (July 2017)
- King County Council (August 2015)
- King County Elder Abuse Council (October 2017)
- King County Women's Advisory Board (July 2017)
- Lifelong Recreation Advisory Council (September 2017)
- Mayor's Council for African American Elders (February 2017)
- Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens Coffee Hour (February & March 2017)
- Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens Volunteer Celebration (December 2016)
- Northwest Universal Design Council presentations:
  - Last Mile Solutions: Improving Access to Healthcare (June 2017)
  - Accessible Design Integration (February 2017)
  - The Power of Inclusion: Universal Design in Landscape (November 2016)
  - Accessible Travel and Tourism (August 2016): [video](#)
  - Are Your Digital Communications Accessible? (April 2016): [video](#)
  - Designing an Accessible Pedestrian Network for All (January 2016)
- Seattle City Council (November 2015)
- Seattle LGBTQ Commission (July 2017)
- Seattle Senior Center Directors (August 2017)
- Sound Generations (May 2015)
- Seattle Rotary 4 (April 2017)
- Southwest Library (January 2017)
- UW Elder Friendly Futures Conference (September 2016)

Events and presentations involving significant number of people of color included Lake City Senior Meal Program (Hispanic/Latino); HIV is Ageless, Central Area Seniors Reception, and Mayor's Council on African American Elders (African American); and SHA Immigrant/Refugee Elders (East African and Asian immigrant/refugee communities).

## **Key findings**

The greatest unmet basic needs identified by older adults are access to safe and affordable options for housing, transportation, healthcare, and socialization. These needs exist throughout Seattle; however, they are greatest for communities of color, low-income older adults, aging LGBTQ individuals, and older women.

Emerging themes include:

- Respect, inclusion, and intergenerational relationships are central tenets that should be woven into each of the domains.
- Basic needs don't exist in isolation and are directly connected to the city's infrastructure and economy. Systems approaches are needed to make an impact—as evident by the intersection of domains.
- Affordability and fear of displacement are major concerns for people of all ages, and a related concern is the opportunity for meaningful livable wage jobs.
- Limited transportation options and traffic/parking challenges make it difficult for many older adults to participate in social activities, increasing their risk of social isolation and poor health (social isolation carries health risk equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day<sup>53</sup>).
- Make it easy for people to get involved and access information through community and neighborhood hubs.
- Grassroots approaches can help address some of our biggest challenges, such as housing and transportation, and even small changes can have a meaningful impact.

## The Eight Domains of Livability

In joining the WHO and AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, Seattle committed to engage in a continuous improvement process to make the city a great place for people of all ages and abilities to grow up and grow old. Age Friendly Seattle will make improvements in eight areas defined by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities—[The 8 Domains of Livability](#)—that influence health and quality of life for older adults.

Three of the domains relate to the built environment—transportation; housing; and outdoor spaces and buildings. The other five domains relate to the social environment—social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; community and health services; and communication and information.

For each domain, we provide examples of current age-friendly initiatives in Seattle, our assessment of significant gaps, the Age Friendly Seattle vision, goal, and actions.



## 1. Transportation

### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

Community mobility is essential to optimal aging. Age Friendly Seattle supports safe, reliable, and easy-to-use travel options—including accessible and affordable public transit, rideshare, walking, and biking—to get people of all ages where they need to go.



### Current age-friendly initiatives

- **Age-Friendly Street Design:** Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is developing a Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods that addresses pedestrian lighting, obstruction-free walking areas, crossings, design of social spaces, traffic calming, transit amenities, benches, wayfinding, play and learning, public toilets, and hill climbs.
- **Transportation Levy:** In 2015, Seattle voters approved funding for [Move Seattle](#), the Seattle Department of Transportation's 10-year plan for a safe, affordable, connected transportation system. The plan recognizes that Seattle's growing population of older adults is most likely to be impacted by serious and fatal traffic collisions. Age-friendly strategies include reducing traffic speeds; improving pavement markings and signs for enhanced visibility and safety; building out an all ages and abilities bicycle network, separated from vehicles; improving access to transit, with easy-to-understand maps, wayfinding support, and improved transit shelters; promoting alternatives to owning a personal vehicle (e.g., car share); and improving walkability through landscaping and other "placemaking" investments and increasing the percentage of destinations with adjacent sidewalks.
- **Collaboration:** [One Center City](#) is a coalition of organizations, including the City of Seattle, King County, the Downtown Seattle Association, and a community advisory council, that is developing a 20-year vision and action plan to improve community mobility and enhance the public realm in the areas of Seattle (and eventually other municipalities) that have the most density.
- **Walkability and Pedestrian Safety:** The Seattle Department of Transportation's [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) focuses on safety, equity, vibrancy, and health. The plan recognizes that older adults who live in accessible, pedestrian-friendly areas are more likely to have social ties to their community. Objectives include increasing pedestrian safety; improving walkability and accessibility on all streets; building [Complete Streets](#); creating vibrant public spaces that encourage pedestrian use; and raising awareness of the important role of pedestrian movement for transportation, recreation, and in promoting health and preventing disease.
  - [Vision Zero](#) is Seattle's plan to end traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030. A majority of pedestrian collisions involve older adults. People over age 50—particularly vulnerable to serious injuries—made up 70% of pedestrian fatalities from 2012 through 2014. Vision Zero promotes pedestrian safety for older adults via partnerships with AARP Washington and local online and broadcast channels, including ethnic media sources, and also through in-person outreach at senior centers, community centers, and senior housing complexes.

- In summer 2016, a comprehensive [sidewalk assessment](#) will provide data on every linear mile of Seattle's sidewalks—all 2,300 miles. Assessment data can be used in the future to prioritize [sidewalk repairs](#) and evaluate requests via 206-684-ROAD and 206-684-TREE [hotlines](#), [Find It Fix It app](#), and online service request form.
- **Public and Community Transportation Options:** The Seattle Human Services Department Aging and Disability Services division participates in the [King County Mobility Coalition](#) and [Puget Sound Regional Council Special Needs Transportation Committee](#), which supports coordination of safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation for individuals who may be disadvantaged due to physical or cognitive limitations, income status, or age. In addition, the City helps to fund transportation programs offered by Sound Generations, a nonprofit community partner, including [Volunteer Transportation](#), which helps people age 60+ get to medical, dental, and other essential appointments, and [Hyde Shuttles](#), which offer round-trip van transportation to hot lunches, senior centers, grocery shopping, and other local errands for people age 55+ and people with disabilities. King County Metro's [ADA Paratransit Program](#) ensures that bus service is accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **Discounts:** [Regional Reduced Fare Permits](#) (RRFPs) make it possible for any Seattle resident age 65+ and for persons with disabilities to ride transit for as low as one dollar (\$1.00). There is no income eligibility requirement—only proof of age or qualifying disability. The permit is issued by transit agencies in several counties, and can be used on a variety of transportation systems, including King County Water Taxi, Metro, Sound Transit, South Lake Union Streetcar, and Washington State Ferries. Metro's [Taxi Scrip Program](#) can provide low-income qualified RRFP holders with a 50% discount on taxi fares. The scrip is accepted by seven taxicab companies.
- **Driver Education:** Seattle Parks and Recreation's [Lifelong Recreation](#) program partners with [AARP Driver Safety](#) to help drivers age 50+ sharpen their skills and drive safely. Completion of the eight-hour course may result in a discount on auto insurance. Per the AARP Age-Friendly Communities [Survey](#), more people need to be made aware of this opportunity.
- **Travel Training:** King County Metro provides free [transit instruction](#) to older adults and individuals with disabilities upon referral from senior centers, social service agencies, senior housing facilities, adult family homes, educators, and others.

## Significant gaps

- **Affordability** continues to be a critical transportation issue for many older adults in Seattle. Approximately one in six Metro Transit riders has a [Regional Reduced Fare Permit](#) (RRFP) or RRFP ORCA card<sup>54</sup>; however, they appear to be underutilized (also, by extension, [Taxi Scrip](#) savings). Because demographic data is masked, Metro Transit provided the following countywide facts and Seattle estimates for this document:
  - 18,423 RRFPs were issued countywide in 2016, including an estimated 10,870 in Seattle (59% of the total number issued, an estimate that uses the same percentage of ORCA LIFT customers who live in Seattle).

- There was a small decrease in RRFP cards issued in 2016 from the previous year (18,670 countywide).
- 2,247 Taxi Scrip purchases were made countywide in 2016, including 1,326 in Seattle (same estimate basis as above). Discounted Taxi Scrip purchases in 2016 totaled \$290,020 countywide (\$129 average).

King County Metro and Seattle Department of Transportation have invested significant resources in promoting ORCA LIFT (\$1.50 fares for low-income transit riders) but not in promoting RRFPs. While some spill-over into RRFP enrollment is likely, thousands of older adults have not taken advantage of the RRFP (and RRFP ORCA) to save money, time, and stress.

- **Transit ridership:** Metro Transit reports nearly half of all non-riders are age 55+. <sup>55</sup>
- **Regional transportation challenges:** The Puget Sound Regional Council has identified a variety of gaps that need attention, including:
  - **Awareness gaps:** Information about transportation options is lacking due to language and cultural barriers, technology, service providers' referrals to less efficient transportation options, marketing targeted to commuters and not individuals with special needs, misinformation, and fear. <sup>56</sup> Expanded information and referral services are needed. <sup>57</sup>
  - **Infrastructure gaps:** Ongoing challenges include provision of accessible walkways, safe crossings (including adequate crossing times), better ramps, benches at waiting areas, weather protection, hygiene amenities, and mobile apps for special needs populations, and the need for affordable, accessible vehicles for people who have disabilities but do not qualify for paratransit services. <sup>58</sup>
  - **Non-emergency medical transportation:** There is a need for more comprehensive access to healthcare, particularly for those who do not qualify for non-emergency [Medicaid Transportation](#), a service provided by Hopelink. Sound Generations provides [Volunteer Transportation](#) services—essential trips for older adults with limited transportation options; however, additional options are needed, particularly for:
    - Low-income Medicare beneficiaries who do not qualify for Medicaid services
    - Patients who need to visit multiple medical facilities in one day. <sup>59</sup>

Improving access to medical transportation can reduce healthcare costs and improve health outcomes. <sup>60</sup>
  - **Better coordination of services:** There is a need for better coordination between service providers, to provide more efficient service and avoid unnecessary duplications in service. Difficulties and areas of concern include:
    - Cross-county travel
    - Transfers between different travel modes, including connections between volunteer services, shuttles, and fixed-route transit <sup>61</sup>
- **Trip Planning Tools:** A wealth of online travel tools are available to transit riders. While older adults use of computers and use smartphones is growing quickly, many do not have online access



to tools such as the [One Bus Away](#) app, traffic [cams and alerts](#), [curb ramp map](#), [parking maps](#), [real-time downtown parking information](#), [PayByPhone](#) parking app, [Puget Sound Trip Planner](#) and other apps. Age, education, income, ethnicity, and disability impact the adoption of new personal technologies.<sup>62</sup>

- **Funding:** Infrastructure costs can be prohibitively expensive. In Seattle, designing and building a single curb ramp costs \$10,000 to \$15,000. One standard block of new sidewalk costs about \$300,000 assuming no driveways or right-of-way to purchase. Despite new funding from the Move Seattle Transportation Levy, current resources are insufficient to build out the transportation network, including sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure, to the standards described in the Age-Friendly Street Design Toolkit.

A sustainable source of funding is needed to support existing special needs transportation services with growing operating costs, and to allow transportation service providers to meet rider needs outside their immediate service area.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Transportation Domain Actions***

To increase community mobility and help get people of all ages where they need to go, the City of Seattle will:

- 1.1. Encourage use of the Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods.
- 1.2. Develop innovative, person-centered transportation solutions.
- 1.3. Address transportation affordability for older adults.
- 1.4. Enhance travel training for older adults to increase transit ridership and improve first-mile/last-mile connections.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

## 2. Housing

### Age Friendly Seattle Vision



Older adults want to age in place—stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible—and benefit from living in affordable, age-friendly housing. Age Friendly Seattle supports diverse housing options that allow older adults of all incomes to live in clean, safe, comfortable, and well-maintained housing; design that encourages *visitability* for all ages and abilities; and availability of a strong network of home-based services in age-friendly neighborhoods.

### Current age-friendly initiatives

- [The Quiet Crisis: Age Wave Maxes Out Affordable Housing, King County 2008–2025](#), released in February 2009, made the case for:
  - Helping Seattle-King County residents prepare to succeed in retirement.
  - Developing policies and services to help older adults remain in their homes as they age.
  - Creating a range of choices for low-income older adults who rely on subsidized housing and state-sponsored health care.
  - Strategically investing public funds to expand the supply of affordable housing for older adults.
  - Encouraging the creation of new types of supportive housing.
  - Providing regulations and incentives to encourage development of affordable housing for older adults.
  - Creating age-friendly neighborhoods by targeting senior housing and infrastructure investments in the neighborhoods that best support healthy aging.

The Seattle Human Services Department, Aging and Disability Services division, is in the process of updating the data in this report and studying emerging trends.

- Seattle Comprehensive Plan Policy H 3.2 states the City's policy to "allow and encourage housing for older adults and people with disabilities, including designs that allow for independent living, various degrees of assisted living, and/or skilled nursing care, in or near urban centers and urban villages where there is access to health care and other services and amenities."<sup>64</sup>
- The City Council passed [legislation](#) in 2014 that encourages expansion of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and detached ADUs (also known as backyard cottages) for a range of ages, incomes, and family sizes. ADUs and backyard cottages can provide flexibility for older adults who might otherwise be priced

## Visitability

**refers to single-family or owner-occupied housing designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers.**

out of the neighborhood they call home, including downsizing, living with extended family, and potentially renting for additional income.<sup>65</sup>

- **Home health and safety repairs:** Thanks to the voter-approved 2016 Housing [Levy](#), the Seattle Office of Housing recently expanded the [home repair program](#) to include grants (in addition to low-interest loans). The grants can be used to fund interior or exterior repairs to a home necessary to maintain or improve homeowner health and safety. Homeowners must be Seattle residents at or below 50% Area Median Income. In 2017, the Office of Housing made 17 home repair loans, of which 71% (12) went to Seattle residents age 60+, and three home repair grants—all Seattle residents age 60+. In 2018, the first full year with home repair grant money available, the Office of Housing expects to make a total of 50 home repair loans or grants. They will continue to market to all ages, including older adults.
- **Renters' Commission:** In 2017, Seattle established a Renters' Commission to represent diverse renter voices across the city and provide information, advice, and counsel on issues and policies affecting renters.
- **Weatherization:** The Seattle Office of Housing's [HomeWise](#) program provides weatherization services (e.g., insulation, air sealing, duct cleaning, new hot water tanks, furnace repair or replacement) for low-income households in older homes, increasing energy efficiency and comfort and decreasing the cost of utilities.
- **Virtual villages:** The [Village Movement](#) has helped redefine aging in place for some residents of Seattle and across the country. Villages are run by volunteers with limited staff support. Services often include transportation, health and wellness programs, home repairs, social and educational activities, and access to vetted and discounted service providers. Seattle villages include [North East Seattle Together](#) (NE Seattle), [PNA Village](#) (NW Seattle), and [Wider Horizons](#) (Central). New villages are forming in [West Seattle](#) and several neighborhoods outside the city limits. As members organizations, they are not City-funded.

## Significant gaps

- **Accessibility:** Many homes do not meet changing functional needs due to physical barriers (e.g., steps, bathroom layout) and may not have enough flexibility to accommodate changing needs at a reasonable cost. Ideally, all homes would meet minimum standards for accessibility (e.g., at least one level entry, doorways wide enough for a large wheelchair).
- **Affordability:** Housing is very expensive in Seattle. The median home sales price within the Seattle city limits was \$675,000 as of June 2017 (\$510,000 in the greater Seattle metro area), compared to the national average of \$298,000.<sup>66</sup> The average apartment rent within the city of Seattle was \$2,210/month (\$2,063/month on average for one bedroom and \$2,788/month average for two bedrooms), as of June 2017.<sup>67</sup> About fifty-three percent (53%) of Seattle's housing units are rentals.<sup>68</sup> Thirty-eight percent (38%) of Seattle's housing units are apartments.<sup>69</sup>

The [Housing Affordability & Livability Agenda \(HALA\)](#) is Seattle's multi-prong strategy for addressing housing affordability in Seattle. Housing is considered affordable to a household if it

costs no more than 30% of a household's income. Because cost-burden is high, many households have difficulty affording food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. HUD defines cost-burdened households as those who pay more than 30% of their income for housing. Severe rent burden is defined as paying more than 50% of one's income on rent.<sup>70</sup> Per the HALA report linked above, elderly non-family households stand out as particularly likely to be cost-burdened (54% of those age 62 or older who rent, compared to 42% of renter households overall). Among Seattle homeowners age 62 or older, about 39% are cost-burdened, compared to 33% of owner households overall. Cost-burden correlates to the greater incidence of poverty among older renters. Among renters age 62 and older, 64% have incomes at or below 50% of Area Median (compared to 40% of all renter households). Among homeowners age 62 and older, 37% have incomes at or below 50% of Area Median (compared to 11% of owner households overall).<sup>71</sup>

- **Property tax exemption program enrollment:** The State's property tax exemption program, administered in King County by the Office of the King County Assessor, is under-enrolled. Following are four apparent reasons:
  - Many older adults don't know the exemption program exists.
  - The enrollment process can be cumbersome, especially for households that are struggling financially and may not have financial records in order.
  - The annual income eligibility threshold is very low (\$40,000) and includes Social Security income. Many older homeowners with incomes that exceed that amount struggle to meet basic needs in Seattle.
  - Misinformation about the property tax *exemption* program includes confusion with the state property tax *deferral* program. In fact, the exemption program does not result in a lien against the property or a debt to be paid by heirs.
- **Stability:** Aging in place requires services and supports that are not always readily available, as housing providers, homeowners, and residents are often unaware of the older adult services network. Additional coordination with housing providers and outreach to older homeowners, older renters, and caregivers is needed. In addition, supportive housing with services for individuals with memory loss is limited, and many managers and staff at senior living communities are not sufficiently trained to understand the progression of Alzheimer's and related dementias.

## **Housing Domain Actions**

To help older adults age in place, the City of Seattle will:

- 2.1. Coordinate with housing stakeholders to assess the housing needs of older adults and develop action strategies.
- 2.2. Implement strategies to help older adults facing financial challenges to hold on to their homes.
- 2.3. Explore innovative housing models, including dementia-friendly housing, cooperative housing, home sharing, and partnerships among senior living communities, colleges and universities.
- 2.4. Promote visitability and independence through home modifications for people with disabilities.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

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### 3. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

#### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

People need public places to gather—indoors and out. Age Friendly Seattle supports parks and other green spaces, safe streets, sidewalks, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings that can be used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.



#### Current age-friendly initiatives

- **Advocacy:** The [Northwest Universal Design Council](#), staffed by the Human Services Department/Aging and Disability Services, promotes visitability through the following design principles: equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use. Universal Design principles can be applied to built environments (e.g., homes, streetscapes, landscapes, commercial developments, products, equipment) and social environments (e.g., group processes) to help make them accessible to every person, regardless of age or ability.
- **Green spaces:** Public open space, parks, playgrounds, and gardens are associated with reduced stress, reduced depression, and better general health. Seattle Office of Sustainability and the Environment (OSE) [Food Action Plan](#) that supports land use to enhance the food system. OSE encourages [P-Patch Community Gardening](#) (a Department of Neighborhoods program) and growing food next to streets on [planting strips](#). Seattle Department of Transportation's [Pavement to Parks](#) and [Adaptive Streets](#) programs turn underutilized roadway space into community gathering places that are accessible by people of all ages and abilities.
- **Meeting places:** The City of Seattle's community centers, neighborhood centers, libraries, and Seattle's quasi-public spaces like family centers, cultural centers, Town Hall provide an array of options for formal and informal meetings.
- **Neighborhood planning:** Many of the City's neighborhood plans include age-friendly elements. Age-friendly plans emphasize the value of creating multifamily neighborhoods where people can age in place (e.g., [Ballard Urban Design](#)); of parks, gathering places, facilities, and programming that reflects the needs of both youth and elders (e.g., [North Delridge Action Plan](#)); and of walkability, including accessibility, safety and security, weather protection, and wayfinding (e.g., [Central Area Urban Design](#)). In addition to physical accessibility, consideration should be given to activity programming (e.g., [Mount Baker Station Design Guidelines](#)). Age-friendly planning processes include workshops and surveys for older residents (e.g., [Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake Urban Design](#)). Age-friendly policies and plans support residential and commercial development that allow people to grow old in their current home and community.
- **Outdoor Fitness Areas:** The Seattle Parks Foundation, Trust for Public Land, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and neighborhood organizations collaborated to install free outdoor gyms in [13 parks](#) across Seattle. Each adult exercise equipment site offers eight to 12 pieces of durable, easy-to-use, vandal-resistant equipment that can be used by adults to tone their arms and legs and get



their heart pumping. Four additional sites will be developed by spring 2019. Outdoor fitness areas are also mentioned in planning documents (e.g., "Active Zones" on public right-of-ways in the First Hill Public Realm Action Plan).<sup>72</sup>

- **Parks planning:** Seattle Parks and Recreation's [Parks Legacy Plan](#) lays out plans for parks, open space, recreation facilities, and programs that contribute to Seattle's physical, mental, and environmental health. The plan calls for creation of recreation and social engagement opportunities for older adults, which are outlined in [Social Participation](#), below.

### **Significant gaps**

- **Accessibility:** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990—a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life—applies to public, private, and nonprofit entities but is not universally understood. Accessibility continues to be a major challenge, not only for individuals with physical mobility challenges but those with vision and/or hearing loss and cognitive limitations. There is "no carrot and or stick" to encourage policy change and enforcement.
- **Broadband Internet access:** The City of Seattle has taken great strides forward in ensuring that residents have access to affordable broadband Internet services; however, equal access has not been achieved yet.
- **Space Capacity:** Reliant on community centers, [Lifelong Recreation](#) competes with other programs for space and is frequently challenged to get sufficient space to keep up with demand.

### **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings Domain Actions**

To help people of all ages and abilities use and enjoy parks and other green spaces, safe streets, sidewalks, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings, the City of Seattle will:

- 3.1. Adopt Universal Design principles in land use and housing policies.
- 3.2. Ensure age-friendly components in neighborhood and/or subarea plans.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

## 4. Social Participation

### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

Social participation and physical activity are essential for both quality of life and longevity. Age Friendly Seattle supports learning, fitness, social, cultural, and spiritual activities for older adults as well as intergenerational activities that are accessible, affordable, safe, and fun.



### Current age-friendly initiatives

- **Lifelong Recreation partnerships:** Seattle Parks and Recreation's [Lifelong Recreation](#) programs focus on physical activity, social engagement, education, arts, creativity, and healthy lifestyles for people age 50+. Lifelong Recreation has built partnerships with myriad organizations to meet community needs. Examples include AARP (driver safety classes), Alzheimer's Association (memory loss walks), Generations Aging with Pride (LGBTQ programs), Kaiser Permanente (Enhance Fitness classes), UW Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (lecture series), Outdoors for All (adaptive recreation), and some senior centers (special events, field trips, and other activities). For examples, see Lifelong Recreation's Fall 2017 [schedule](#).
- **Walking groups:** Within Lifelong Recreation, the City sponsors [Sound Steps](#), a free year-round walking program for people age 50+ that increases physical activity and social connections. Sound Steps relies heavily on volunteers to lead walks, track walker data, and promote the program.
- **Dementia-friendly activities:** Also within Lifelong Recreation, the City offers [Dementia-Friendly](#) programs for people living with memory loss. Dementia-Friendly and Sound Steps enjoy partnerships with the Woodland Park Zoo—see [Senior Zoo Walkers](#) and [Early Stage Memory Loss Zoo Walks](#)—and a variety of City programs have working relationships other organizations that offer programs and activities through [Momentia Seattle](#), a grassroots movement empowering individuals with memory loss and their loved ones to remain connected and active in the community.
- **Disability-friendly activities:** Seattle Parks and Recreation's [Specialized Programs](#) provide welcoming, accessible, and affordable recreation and social programs and activities designed for people with a range of cognitive and physical disabilities and their families, which welcome them as part of the community.
- **Immigrant/refugee elders:** HSD/Aging and Disability Services partners with Lifelong Recreation to offer [Food and Fitness](#) programs—a combination of fitness and meal sharing for older adults that meets dietary needs of adults age 60+ and celebrates Korean, Vietnamese, and East African cultures.
- **Seattle Parks District:** The [Parks District](#) has been instrumental in funding activities for elders from immigrant and refugee communities, expanding dementia-friendly programming, and providing scholarships for involvement in Lifelong Recreation programs.

- **Gold and FLASH cards:** Since the late 1990s, Seattle has produced a [Gold Card for Healthy Aging](#) (age 60+) and related FLASH card for individuals with disabilities (age 18-59). The card provides contact information for information and referrals, and is honored by some establishments offering special discounts on goods, services, and activities. The cards are very popular, marketed primarily by word-of-mouth and available at a variety of Seattle program offices (e.g., animal shelters, neighborhood service centers, community centers).

## Significant gaps

- **Ethnic community social programming:** Food and Fitness programming is currently limited to the communities mentioned above. Additional resources (food, space, and staffing) are needed to serve additional ethnic communities, including Latino elders in South Park and south Seattle.
- **Senior discounts:** A popular senior discount directory related to the Gold Card for Healthy Aging (age 60+) and FLASH Card for adults with disabilities (age 18-59) has diminished in size over the past decade due to the cumbersome task of updating and limited funds for printing. Seattle is home to thousands of retail, service, entertainment, tourism, and other organizations that could offer discounts for older adults and/or adults with disabilities. Discounts are one way that organizations could participate in our Age Friendly Seattle initiative. An interactive online directory is needed to streamline solicitation of discounts and directory maintenance. Numerous partnership opportunities exist.
- **Social isolation:** Thousands of older adults in Seattle are at risk of social isolation, as indicated by the AARP Age-friendly Communities [Survey](#), the [Aging with Pride](#) study, and the total number of adults age 65+ who [live alone](#). Social isolation is a significant public health problem across the nation. According to the AARP Foundation website [Connect2Affect](#):
  - 17% of American adults 65+ are isolated.
  - Research shows a 26% increased risk of death due to subjective feeling of loneliness.
  - Six million adults age 65+ have a disability that prevents them from leaving their homes without help.
  - 51% of people age 75+ live alone.

Seattle can reduce isolation through more intentional outreach to older adults, especially through Parks/Lifelong Recreation Programs, which are designed for adults age 50+, as well as community organizing activities performed by Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Emergency Management, and Seattle Police Department.

See related information in sections on [Respect & Social Inclusion](#) and on [Community & Health Services](#), which follow.

## Social Participation Domain Actions

To support social participation and physical activity for older adults and intergenerational activities that are accessible, affordable, safe, and fun, the City of Seattle will:

4.1. Identify gaps in serving the social participation needs of older adults at risk of social isolation and develop strategies to reach out to them.

4.2. Provide more opportunities for older adults and adults with disabilities to engage in the life of their community.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

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## 5. Respect & Social Inclusion

### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

Everyone wants to feel valued. Age Friendly Seattle celebrates and draws upon the wisdom and experience of older adults, encourages intergenerational and multicultural understanding, and works to eliminate ageism and ensure consistent levels of high-quality service for all ages.



### Current age-friendly initiatives

- **ADA Compliance:** The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) leads policy setting, coordination, and training as it pertains to the City's obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II, which are to ensure that all City programs, services, and activities readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities. ADA coordinators have been appointed by each City department to assist in implementing department processes to improve access and to receive and respond to requests from the public for reasonable accommodations.
- **Boards, commissions, and advisory councils:** The City of Seattle staffs three advisory groups whose advocacy directly influences age-friendly policy, programs, services, and funding—the [Commission for People with disAbilities](#), [Mayor's Council on African American Elders](#), and [Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services](#).

### Significant gaps

- **Accommodation requests:** City of Seattle staff have not been adequately trained to understand and respond efficiently to requests for ADA accommodations (e.g., ASL interpretation, CART captioning, Braille, audio recordings).
- **LGBTQ support:** Two common concerns expressed at [Aging the LGBTQ Way](#) (June 3, 2017) were lack of a LGBTQ-specific information and assistance hub and lack of LGBTQ-competent health care and other service providers.
- **Negative perceptions of aging:** Personal and community perceptions of aging influence how we live as well as social, economic and political priorities. A simple thesaurus search on aging produces mostly pejorative terms associated with decline. Myths and stereotypes on aging include: frail, weak, fragile, sick, physically impaired, eyesight and hearing problems, dependent, associated with death, declining physical appearance, lacking sexual desire, mental decline, extreme dispositions (i.e., difficult and pessimistic, warm and kind), lonely, isolated, disrespected, and undervalued. Negative perceptions of aging carry a high cost to society: ageism in health care and employment, social exclusion, and elder abuse and neglect.<sup>73</sup> Two-thirds of boomers find senior program and service identification of little appeal.<sup>74</sup> Many older adults do not participate in senior center activities because of the perception that "senior citizens" are old and frail.<sup>75</sup> New approaches must be used to create a new and authentic perception that the wisdom, talents, and experience of older adults are community assets.



## ***Respect & Social Inclusion Domain Actions***

To help people of all ages and abilities feel valued, the City of Seattle will:

- 5.1. Ensure that every City of Seattle employee understands the impacts of age, disability, and dementia/cognitive development, and the City's "no wrong door" service for information and assistance, so they can respond to and meet needs effectively.
- 5.2. Strengthen support for LGBTQ elders in Seattle.
- 5.3. Increase community understanding of dementia, its effects, and ways to be supportive.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

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## 6. Civic Participation & Employment

### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

Whether working for pay or volunteering time and talent, many older adults find value in contributing to their communities. Age Friendly Seattle supports services for mature jobseekers who need or want to work, promotes age-friendly business practices, and encourages older adults to share their skills to address community needs.



### Current age-friendly initiatives

Older residents who volunteer in their communities live longer and report less disability.<sup>76</sup> Encore careers make a difference by tapping older adults who have retired but still wish to make a difference. For many, employment means being able to maintain a home and meet basic needs in Seattle.

- **Advocacy:** Seattle-King County [Advisory Council](#) on Aging & Disability Services advocates for local, state, and national programs that promote quality of life for older people and adults with disabilities. The council, mandated by the federal Older Americans Act as part of the Aging Network, advises the Seattle Human Services Department's Aging and Disability Services division, which is the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County. The Advisory Council hosts periodic public forums. In addition, Aging and Disability Services hosts monthly coffee hours for older adults.
- **City family leave:** The City of Seattle paid family care leave policy is age-friendly because it allows paid leave to care for a child, spouse, domestic partner, parent, or the child or parent of a spouse or domestic partner.
- **City retirement policies:** City retirement policies allow flexibility in determining when to leave City employment, determining benefits using an employee's highest 24 consecutive months of pay (average) rather than the final 24 consecutive months of pay to calculate benefits.
- **Job Search Support:** The Age 55+ Employment Resource Center assists mature jobseekers in finding work. Services include one-on-one coaching, job search workshops, weekly job listings, and computer training, and referral to additional training resources.
- **Lifelong Learning:** [Seattle Public Library](#) provides a wealth of learning opportunities for individuals of all ages, downtown and at 26 branch libraries throughout the city, via mobile services, and online, as well as an array of [volunteer opportunities](#). Library programs and services of particular benefit to older adults include:
  - *Hot Topics Discussions for Seniors:* A social discussion group focusing on issues of current interest to older adults. These events are hosted regularly at the Southwest and Green Lake branches, as well as at Green Lake's Village Cove senior community.
  - *Senior Book Groups:* The Northeast Branch hosts a monthly book discussion group for older adults and the South Park Branch staff makes monthly visits to the South Park Senior Center to host morning and evening book discussions.

- *Diverse programming:* Programs, classes, lectures, and readings of interest to all ages include local candidate debates, nationally televised debate screenings, annual tax help, intergenerational chess clubs, gallery exhibits highlighting local history, hands-on technology assistance, and Medicare workshops.
- *Library Equal Access Program (LEAP):* LEAP provides adaptive equipment, an accessible lab, assistive technology classes, resource lists and more to all ages.
- *Mobile Services:* For patrons who cannot physically access Library buildings due to barriers related to illness, age, disability or transportation, a Mobile Services unit provides on-site access to Library materials and programs. Bookmobiles regularly visit eligible retirement homes, nursing homes and other elder-care facilities. Mobile Services also provides a unique iPad lending program to low-income seniors.
- **Mayor's Council on African American Elders:** The [MCAAE](#) advises City officials on accessible, culturally appropriate policies and comprehensive programs and services that promote a quality of life for African American elders in Seattle, particularly those who are isolated, frail, and low-income.
- **Parks Advisory Councils:** [Lifelong Recreation](#) and [Specialized Recreation](#) have advisory councils that helps to plan and fund fitness and enrichment activities. Most classes, workshops, sports programs, special events, and facility rentals are funded through the local advisory councils, rather than from City of Seattle budget. In general, Lifelong Recreation, Specialized Programs, and [Sound Steps](#) attract considerable volunteer support (e.g., 17,077 hours from 750 volunteers in 2012<sup>77</sup>).

## Significant gaps

- **Age-Friendly Business:** The [Seattle Office of Economic Development](#) (OED) has strong connections with local chambers of commerce, business improvement districts, specific industry groups, and colleges and universities. OED could use those connections to disseminate information that helps businesses and other organizations become more age-friendly. An excellent model exists in [New York City](#).
- **Boards and Commissions:** Due in large part to the success of the YMCA's [Get Engaged](#) program, which helps place young adults ages 18-29 on City of Seattle boards and commissions, the Mayor and Council receives recommendations from civic-minded youth and young adults in service to the City. The same bodies would do well to include voices of older adults, particularly those who live on a limited income and/or experience life in Seattle with a disability.
- **Intergenerational programming:** Current opportunities for intergenerational programming that help build trust and understanding are currently limited to community-based programs such as [Generation to Generation Seattle](#), which initiates intergenerational volunteer roles for older adults through youth-serving organizations, part of a national intergenerational mobilization effort. Much can be gained by developing intergenerational programming based on mutual respect and needs,
- **Lifelong learning:** Given growing numbers of older Seattle residents, Seattle Public Library would do well to hire an older adults project specialist to develop services for residents age 50+, modeled after [King County Library System's 50+ program](#). In addition, collaboration among library systems and other programs serving older adults would benefit all.

- **Mature workers:** Employment services for mature jobseekers can be strengthened by partnering with local human services professionals who, as volunteers, could provide stronger resume and interviewing assistance.
- **Self-sufficiency:** The [Elder Index](#) paints a dire picture of aging in Seattle for some residents; however, this can be an important planning tool, as can the Self-Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State and the National Council on Aging's [EconomicCheckUp](#) and [BenefitsCheckUp](#). These tools can be promoted to a greater degree by each City departments, to employees and the public.
- **Volunteerism:** The City of Seattle lists a variety of volunteer opportunities at [www.seattle.gov/services-and-information/volunteering-and-participating](http://www.seattle.gov/services-and-information/volunteering-and-participating) but screening by keywords referring to older adults did not significantly simplify the search. The City, community-based organizations, and older residents would benefit from providing training that helps organizations build their capacity to use highly-trained volunteers, particularly in place of hiring consultant.

### ***Civic Participation & Employment Domain Actions***

To help older adults find value in contributing to their communities and to lower the unemployment rate among people age 55+, the City of Seattle will:

- 6.1. Provide tools to help businesses and employers become more age-, disability-, and dementia-friendly.
- 6.2. Enhance the opportunities to mobilize the wisdom and experience of older adults, including people with disabilities and/or dementia, and provide opportunities for adults age 50+ and adults with disabilities to live with passion and purpose.
- 6.3. Partner with human services professionals to support employment of older adults who are looking for work.
- 6.4. Support development of new programming for individuals age 50+, including people with dementia.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

## 7. Community & Health Services

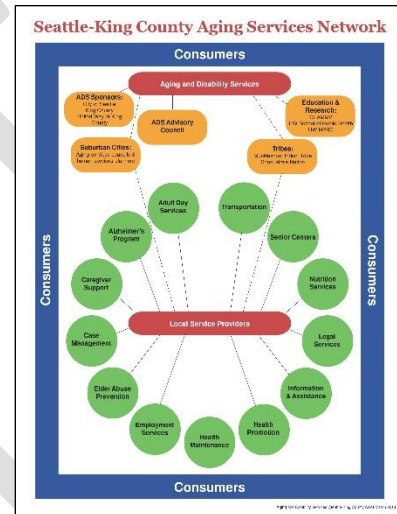
### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

All people should have access to affordable health care and community services that help them live comfortably and with dignity. Age Friendly Seattle supports coordination and promotion of services to help meet the needs of older adults and caregivers.



### Current age-friendly initiatives

- Area Agency on Aging:** [Aging and Disability Services](#) (ADS)—a division of the [Seattle Human Services Department](#)—is designated by the State of Washington as the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County. Area Agencies are part of the Aging Network that was established in 1965 with the passage of the Older Americans Act. ADS receives federal, state, and some local funds to provide a network of in-home and community services, support programs, and assistance to older adults and adults with qualifying disabilities. Services include adult day services, Alzheimer's support, [caregiver support](#) (including respite care), case management, elder abuse prevention, employment services, health maintenance, health promotion—[falls prevention](#), [chronic disease self-management](#), [depression counseling](#), and a variety of [nutrition programs](#), including home-delivered meals (commonly called "Meals on Wheels"), congregate/community meals, and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program—legal services, senior centers, and certain types of transportation, as well as information and assistance (Community Living Connections).
- Community Living Connections:** ADS administers Community Living Connections, a service that is in effect, the City of Seattle's "no wrong door" information and referral service for aging and disability questions.
- Fitness:** [Lifelong Recreation](#) currently partners with a number of healthcare-based programs. Studies have shown a 72% decrease in hospital days, 35% decrease in use of psychoactive drugs and 11% decrease in depressive symptoms for participants as well as 35% improvement in physical function.<sup>78</sup>
- Nutrition:** In addition to nutrition programs supported and/or promoted by ADS (referenced above), the City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment administers [Fresh Bucks](#), a program that matches Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—called [Basic Food](#) in Washington state and "food stamps" generically—benefits dollar-for-dollar up to \$10 at participating farmers market locations in Seattle and King County, per day.
- Senior centers:** The City of Seattle helps to fund all [senior centers](#) in Seattle, and collaborates in programming activities at many. Studies have shown that, compared with their peers, senior center



participants have higher levels of health, social interaction, and life satisfaction. Centers are located in South Park, Southeast Seattle, West Seattle, Central Area, Pike Market, Wallingford, Ballard, and Greenwood. In Northeast Seattle, [Lake City Seniors](#) is "a senior center without walls" that provides activities and programs at a variety of locations, including the Lake City Community Center (owned by Seattle Parks and Recreation and leased to the North Seattle Chamber of Commerce). Programs are offered at other neighborhood sites, and are likely to be offered to senior housing participants in the future.

## Significant gaps

- **Dementia-friendly communities:** A dementia-friendly community as one that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals with dementia and their families, provides supportive options, and fosters quality of life. Although the City of Seattle provides [dementia-friendly activities](#) through the Parks department and collaborates with other organizations through [Momentia Seattle](#), much more can be done to infuse dementia-friendly concepts into our communities. Since 95% of people who have Alzheimer's disease are age 65 or older<sup>79</sup>, and because age-friendly and dementia-friendly communities are not synonymous, strategies that support individuals with memory loss should be integrated into Seattle's Age Friendly Seattle initiative, saving duplication, time, and money.<sup>80</sup>
- **Elder abuse:** Every year an estimated one in ten individuals age 60-plus experience abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and many experienced it in multiple forms.<sup>81</sup> For every one case of elder abuse that is reported, another 23 cases never come to light.<sup>82</sup> The incidence of elder abuse in America is so pervasive that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now consider it a major public health problem.<sup>83</sup> The City of Seattle must remain committed to expanding its coordinated response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation, internally and in collaboration with the King County Elder Abuse Council (Seattle Human Services Department/Aging and Disability Services, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and others). Training is necessary to ensure that public sector employees and any service providers (public, nonprofit, or private) who enter homes understand the signs of possible elder abuse and self-neglect.
- **Homebound residents:** Programming at housing sites would make easier for home- and building-bound residents to participate in fitness, social, and health programming.
- **Homeless residents:** Vulnerable older adults—including those who are frail or abused—and parents of adult children with disabilities who experience displacement are not comfortable using shelters. Frequently, elders who are abused by family caregivers have no place to go but emergency rooms.

**"A dementia friendly community is age-friendly, but an age-friendly community is not necessarily dementia friendly."**

—Better Together: A Comparative Analysis of Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Communities



- **No wrong door:** [Community Living Connections](#) is not widely known outside of the human services arena, but is a valuable resource for employees who have direct and regular public contact. Anyone concerned about the general welfare of an older adult can contact Community Living Connections for assistance.
- **Nutrition:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is underutilized by older adults.<sup>84</sup> To apply for SNAP/Basic Food, visit [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org).

### ***Community & Health Services Domain Actions***

To support access to affordable health care and community services that meet the needs of older adults and caregivers, the City of Seattle will:

- 7.1. Develop strategies to reach more older adults who lack access to services.
- 7.2. Continue awarding small grants for creative age-friendly/healthy aging projects through the HSD Innovation Fund.
- 7.3. Coordinate outreach to older adults among neighborhood organizations.
- 7.4. Increase public awareness of elder abuse and self-neglect, and enhance safety.
- 7.5. Increase long-term services and supports, including caregiver support.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

## 8. Communication & Information



### Age Friendly Seattle Vision

Older adults receive information in a variety of ways, and no one way reaches every person. Age Friendly Seattle promotes accessible print and digital communications, and community partnerships that increase access to information that older adults need for optimal aging.

### Current age-friendly initiatives

- **Assisted listening:** At Seattle City Hall, the Council Chamber and Bertha Knight Landes reception room have been equipped with hearing loops that transmit signals from the audio system to T-coil equipped hearing aids and devices. Receivers and headsets are also available.
- **Effective communications:** As part of the ADA compliance activities referenced in [Respect & Social Inclusion](#), above, a small team of ADA coordinators has been trained on the components of effective print, digital, and face-to-face communications, and others have received an introduction to accessible web design.
- **Language access and ethnic media:** The [Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs](#) (OIRA) has developed a communication and access plan to make Seattle more welcoming and inclusive of English language learners, many of whom are foreign-born elders. OIRA has made excellent strides in developing relationships with [ethnic media](#). The Office serves as a resource to other departments.
- **New Citizen Program and New Citizen Campaign:** While not designed specifically for elders, these OIRA case management and [citizenship](#) programs are robustly-used by older adults.
- **Digital equity:** The City's [Digital Equity Initiative](#) has identified disparities in Internet access and digital literacy skills among older adults, adults with disabilities, residents with lower education and/or lower incomes, minorities, and immigrants, and has invested in strategies to resolve inequities.
- **Community liaisons:** The Department of Neighborhoods' [Community Liaisons](#) program has increased outreach to and engagement with immigrant and refugee communities, African Americans, Native Americans, homeless individuals, LGBTQ, individuals with disabilities, youth, and older adults.

### Significant gaps

- **Accessible events and meetings:** City of Seattle staff have not been adequately trained to plan events and meetings that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- **Accommodation requests:** See [Respect & Social Inclusion](#), above.
- **Captioning:** The City's municipal television station, The Seattle Channel (Channel 21 on Comcast & Wave, 8003 on CenturyLink; HD Channel 321 on Comcast, 721 on Wave, 8503 on CenturyLink) is not closed captioned for viewers with hearing loss.

- **Dementia-friendly communications:** City of Seattle staff would benefit from training about memory loss and dementia-supportive customer service.
- **Effective communications:** City of Seattle staff have not been adequately trained to ensure that print and digital communications are age- and disability-friendly. City communications require plain language.

### ***Communication & Information Domain Actions***

To increase access to information that older adults need for optimal aging, the City of Seattle will:

- 8.1. Ensure that all City employees who plan events or meetings, or have contact with the public are adequately trained to meet the communication needs of individuals with disabilities. See also trainings under Respect & Social Inclusion, above.
- 8.2. Adopt and adhere to a Minimum Accessibility Standard for City communications.
- 8.3. Determine assisted listening needs for all City meeting rooms and gathering places.

For more information, visit the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan.

# Implementation & Evaluation

Age Friendly Seattle assessed the needs of the community, and developed this long-range action plan. The plan will be implemented over four years (2018–2021) and evaluated at regular intervals.

We will strive to ensure that the Age Friendly Task Force is reflective of Seattle's racial demographics. We will work with partners of power to prioritize action items that support optimal aging for people of color, immigrants/refugees, English language learners, LGBTQ community members, and women.

## Human Services Department Leadership

The Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) was named to lead the City of Seattle's age-friendly initiative. One of the department's [six key platforms](#) is "Promoting Healthy Aging." Through its Aging and Disability Services division, the department invests \$39.8 million in a combination of direct services and in funding agencies that support older individuals, those living with a disability, and their families.

HSD set four planning assumptions for the age-friendly initiative:

1. Increase racial equity
2. Increase public awareness about the challenges and opportunities that accompany Seattle's aging population
3. Increase social participation
4. Reduce displacement

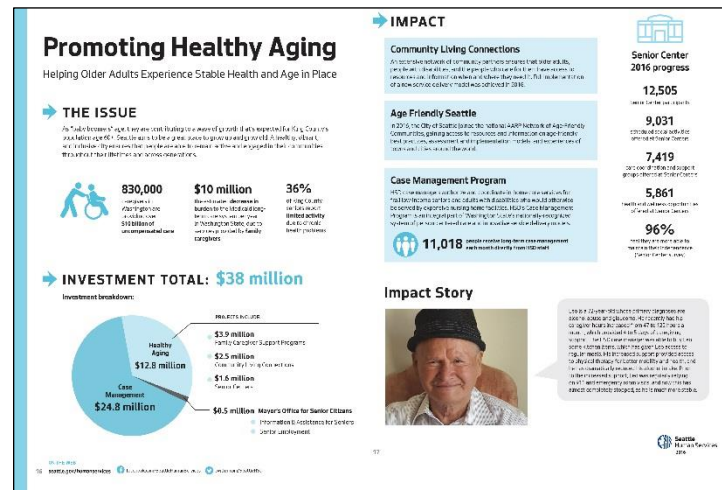
Implementation of the Age Friendly Seattle Action Plan will be overseen by HSD. The plan provides HSD with the opportunity to positively influence sectors that are typically outside the human services' sphere of influence, such as housing, transportation, and the built environment, which directly impact the ability to achieve our vision of and impact change on a broader scale.

On a regular basis to be determined, HSD will report to the Mayor and to the Council committee assigned to human services.

## Age Friendly Seattle Office

An Age Friendly Seattle Office will be created in HSD's Aging and Disability Services division to:

- Oversee implementation and ongoing evaluation of this action plan
- Coordinate with all City departments
- Communicate with the broader community (public and private) to make Seattle a better place to grow up and grow old.



Click on the image above to open a two-page PDF.

To accomplish this, the Age Friendly Seattle Office will:

- Meet regularly with department leads and an interdepartmental team.
- Seek advice and support from the community-based Age Friendly Task Force.
- Ensure that the City's [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) is reviewed on an annual basis.
- Develop an additional age-friendly equity lens to include:
  - How will this policy, initiative, program, or budget issue affect age equity?
  - How does this policy, initiative, program, or budget issue increase age diversity, inclusiveness, and dignity for all people?

Duties specific to Age Friendly Seattle staffing are outlined in the Age Friendly Seattle Work Plan (a separate document): System Change & Age Friendly Seattle Oversight.

## **Evaluation Plan**

Age Friendly Seattle will use current tools to measure outcomes.

HSD baseline measures for healthy aging are:

- 41% of older adults experiencing chronic disease.
- 81% older adults who report getting the social and emotional support needed.
- 81% of older adults reporting good or excellent health.

## **Dashboard**

The Age Friendly Seattle Office and Human Services Department will oversee development of an online data dashboard to show progress toward broad goals.

# Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the following organizations and volunteer advisory groups for their support of Age Friendly Seattle through event sponsorship, task force participation, and other ways.

- AARP Livable Communities
- AARP Washington
- African American Elders Program, Catholic Community Services
- Aging Wisdom
- Arcora Foundation (Delta Dental of Washington)
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service
- Central Area Senior Center
- Chinese Information and Service Center
- Crone of Puget Sound
- El Centro de la Raza
- Fedelta Home Care
- Generation 2 Generation Seattle
- Generations Aging with Pride
- Hassanah Consulting
- Healthy Aging Partnership
- Home Instead Senior Care
- Hopelink
- Horizon House
- Iora Primary Care
- Kin On Community Healthcare
- King County Department of Community & Human Services
- King County Mobility Coalition
- King County Women's Advisory Board
- Korean Women's Association
- Lake City Seniors
- LeadingAge Washington
- Lifelong Recreation Advisory Council
- Mayor's Council on African American Elders
- National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
- Northaven Senior Living
- Northwest Center for Creative Aging
- Northwest Universal Design Council
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Region X
- Open Seattle
- Phinney Neighborhood Association/Greenwood Senior Center
- Providence Mount St. Vincent
- Public Health—Seattle & King County
- Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action
- Seattle disAbilities Commission
- Seattle Housing Assistance Group
- Seattle Housing Authority
- Seattle LGBTQ Commission
- Seattle Women's Commission
- Silver Kite Community Arts
- Sound Generations
- Thriving Communities
- Urban @UW
- UW Health Promotion and Research Center
- UW School of Nursing
- UW Taskar Center for Accessible Technology
- Washington State Housing Finance Commission
- West Seattle Timebank
- Women's Funding Alliance

... and all City of Seattle departments and offices listed inside the front cover!



## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Preparing for the Age Wave, Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services, accessed at [www.agingkingcounty.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/185/2016/09/Preparing-for-the-Age-Wave.pdf](http://www.agingkingcounty.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/185/2016/09/Preparing-for-the-Age-Wave.pdf).
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- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2013
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